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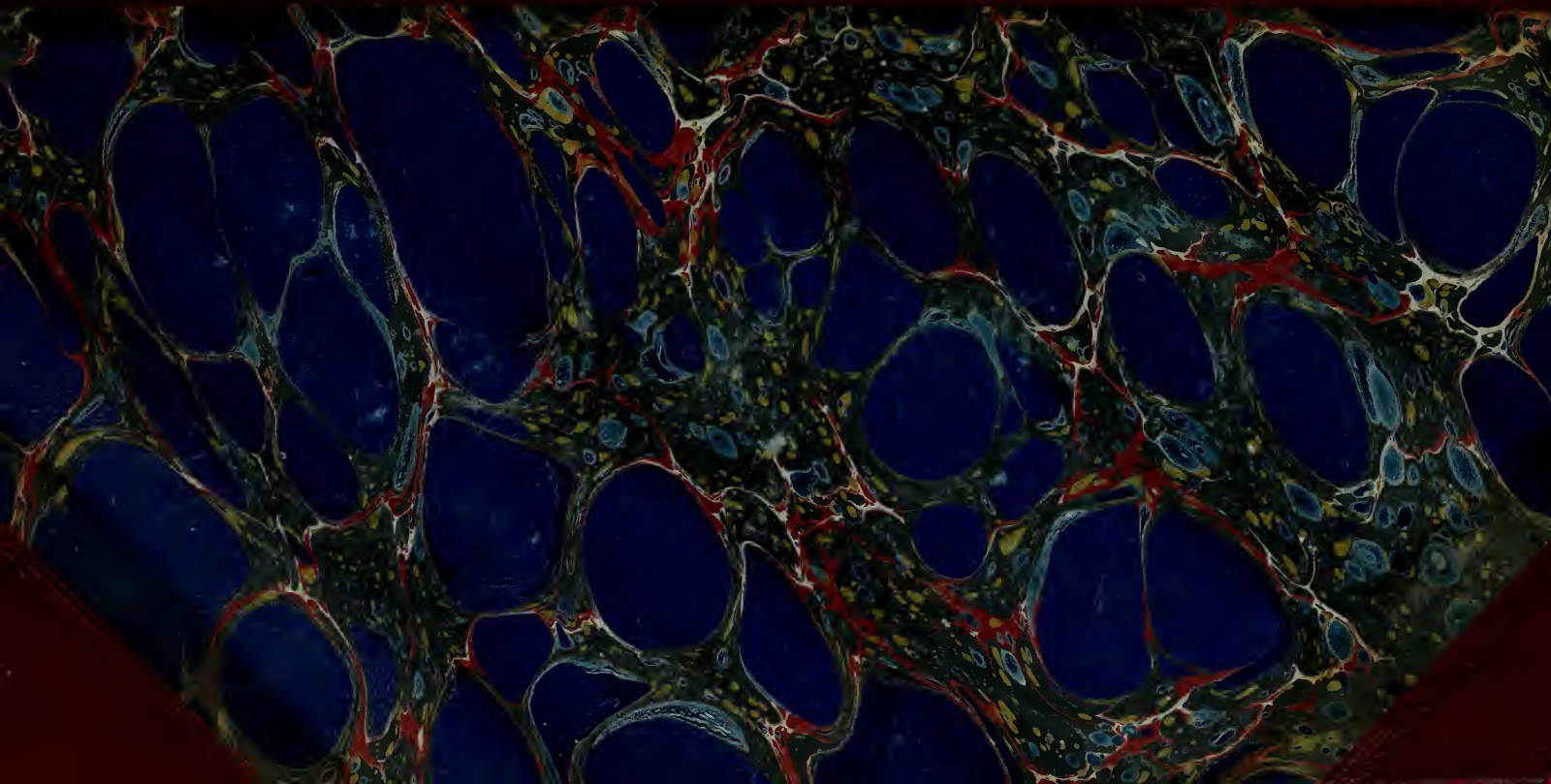

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J. SWAIN.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XXV.

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THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER I.

JOAN POMEROY.

NEVER was there a more gloomy structure than that of the old Abbey of Pomeroy, with its grey walls, overgrown in places with lichen and other kinds of moss, its narrow Gothic casements, and its decaying towers. It was in keeping with the scenery around. Situated on a wild part of the coast of England, it was flanked by bleak and bold rocks on the one side, and a dark forest on the other. Not that the trees were in close proximity to the abbey; they were considerably removed from it, forming, as it were, a background in the distance. The abbey faced the east; and from its front descended a gentle hill, where a few houses, most of them very poor, were honoured with the title of village, taking its name from their site, "Abbeyland;" for the houses were built on lands pertaining to it. This hill wound round to the right, and led onwards to the dark and gloomy forest. In days gone by, in the time of the Norman kings, this place had been the stronghold of the De Pomeroys, who were noted warriors; then they seemed to have dwindled away and disappeared, and the abbey was for a century or two the abode of some religious order of monks. After that, it had come again into the hands of the Pomeroys, who professed to be lineal descendants of the ancient family, and who in fact were so. They retained their original faith, that of Roman Catholic, but they dropped the "de" before their name. The reigning head and chief of the abbey was called the Lord of Pomeroy; a privilege bestowed, it was said, upon the family by one of our Norman kings.

The abbey was built in the form of a quadrangle; a solid square stone building, with a turret at each corner. The entrance gates, of massive iron, stood in the middle of the front, or east pile. Entering these gates, and passing their dark, spacious archway, to the square opening that lay in the midst of the building, we see how large it is. Each side contains rooms enough for a numerous household. Standing with our faces to the entrance gates, the chief, or east pile lies before us, and its corner turret to our left hand as we stand, is called the East Tower. The north wing lies between the east and the north towers; the west wing lies between the north and the west towers (and which west wing forms the back of the structure); and the south wing, lying to our right between the west and south towers, brings us back to the front and starting point. Of these various piles, or sides, or wings, as you may please to call them, only the front and the north are inhabited at present, though all (save the west) are furnished for occupation in a greater or lesser degree. The rooms in the west wing, and more particularly those in the west tower, have the reputation of being haunted; and for a long time past no one has lived in them. It should also be said that this west wing, though apparently looking as large as the other wings to us who stand in the open quadrangle below, is a very deceptive wing. For it is not half the width of the other wings; and the rooms, instead of being numerous, are few, and all of them look out upon the abbey itself, and the quadrangle it encloses, there being no windows whatever at the back. As to the quadrangle itself, with its grassy flooring, if that term may be allowed, it looks exactly like a gloomy grave-yard enclosed by cloisters. All round the quadrangle, between the abbey and the grass, lie roofed cloisters supported by pillars; their casements are unglazed, open to the quadrangle; doors lead from it into the quadrangle in places, as they do from the cloisters into the house.

If there were a window looking out to the back in the west wing, and we could take our stand at it, we should look upon a wide expanse of wood and dale. To the right, as we are supposing that we look, lie the stables and coach houses; beyond them is the chapel, surmounted by its quaint cross, and the grave-yard beside it. Near the grave-yard is the little house inhabited by the priest, Father Andrew, who shrives the abbey and the village and the neighbourhood in general, for nearly everybody is of the old faith. A long way further off may be seen the chimnies of a large building rising against the horizon: they belong to a convent. It has existed for centuries, having been spared the destruction which so many other religious communities underwent in troublous times, though a portion of it was once rebuilt after a fire. It is of a rigid order, and is an educational establishment as well as a convent. A few houses nestling within their own grounds may be observed, scattered here and there in the distance: some good catholic families inhabit them, drawn to

the neighbourhood originally by the convent, and by the far-famed abbey and its strictly Roman catholic owners.

Rather to our left, and very near the abbey, stands a small, round stone building, grey and old; it is covered with moss like the abbey, and is called the keep. A slope of green grass descends from it somewhat abruptly to a low level dell; and then the ground gently rises again to the abbey walls. At present this keep is vacant; but it has sometimes been inhabited by one or other faithful retainer of the family when he has grown too old for service; it is said that the present lord intends his own man, Jerome, to retire to it later. On this west side the abbey has no entrance whatever. Neither has the south side any outer entrance; if you want to enter it you must travel round to the front gates. On the north side lie the garden and grounds, which are extensive.

Hugh, Lord of Pomeroy, the present chief and head of the family, had two daughters and four sons: Guy, Rupert, George, and Leolin; Guy of course being the heir. George, Captain Pomeroy, was with his regiment in Ireland, though he had recently been sojourning at the abbey; in fact, as his father told him, he seemed to be always getting leave of absence and coming home. Leolin was on the continent, being an attaché at one of our embassies there. Guy and Rupert were at home; neither had any profession or calling. Guy was the heir: and Rupert had come into a fair fortune when he was of age, bequeathed to him by his mother, because he was the second son, though it was well-known that her favourite son was the third, George. The rest thought it very unfair that Rupert should have this money, Guy especially; but the Lady of Pomeroy had so left it in her will, and nothing could be done about it after her death. It might have been just as well that Rupert had not inherited the bequest. He had hastened to London, to Paris, and to other gay places, and spent it right and left. When it was all gone, and more to it, for which he was in debt thick and threefold, back he came to the abbey and took up his abode in it. That was a twelvemonth ago, and here he was still.

Guy and Rupert Pomeroy were remarkably tall, fine men, just of a height, nearly six feet three, and alike in figure. They had both the high, handsome features of the Pomeroys, the bright brown hair, and the deep-grey eyes: but there the resemblance apparently ended. Guy was of a pale complexion, almost ghastly; his features, in themselves as well formed as Rupert's, were rendered plain by their exceedingly stern expression, and by his possessing what is called a hare lip, all efforts to close which had failed in infancy. Rupert's complexion was more fresh and beautiful than is often owned by man, the expression of his face was winning, though somewhat free, and his mouth was one of great sweetness. In voice also they differed: Guy's being deep and harsh, Rupert's pleasant as music.

It was a bright summer morning, and the cloth for breakfast

was laid in the usual room; a small apartment on the first floor, that looked to the front of the abbey. Many of the rooms on the ground floor were given over to the servants: and their windows were all protected outside by cross-bars of iron. Standing at the narrow open casement of this breakfast-room, while waiting for her father and brothers, was Miss Pomeroy, gazing out upon the old familiar features, which she had not seen so long: the rocks, the straggling village, and a large white house nearly hidden by trees, which lay half way up the hill beyond. She had returned home the previous evening from an absence of eight months. Some years ago her sister Isabel had married the Honourable Henry Capel, and had already more children than she could count. Joan often went to stay with her, but had never remained away so long before. She had been named Joan after a certain Dame Joan de Pomeroy, famous for her beauty in the reign of King John. Poor Joan—this Joan—was plain, tall, and angular, her hair very dark, and her complexion nearly olive coloured; but her features were good. She was twenty-nine this year; her sister Isabel, the eldest of the family, being one year older. Rupert entered.

"What are you looking at, Joan?"

"Not at anything in particular. Just then I was watching the smoke curling up from the White House. How do you get on with its inmates, Rupert? Have you become intimate with them?"

"Guy has."

"Guy!"

"He and the lord are there often. Indeed, I began to think that we were going to be presented, gratis, with a lady-in-law ——"

"Rupert!" interrupted Joan, in a tone of rebuke.

"Or step-lady—how runs it?" continued the unmoved Rupert. "Until I found that the play lay in a different direction. The lord and Mrs. Wylde were but courting for their children."

Joan drew up her head. "As if papa would condescend to anything of the kind, Rupert! Tell me what you mean."

"The son-and-heir is to settle," cried Rupert; "so runs the programme; and ——"

"Guy cannot afford it. You have all been too extravagant for him to think of marrying: papa has often told him so. Two households in the abbey would double the present cost."

"I should like to have a guinea for every superfluous word you drop in a day, Joan," laughed Rupert Pomeroy, who was the essence of good temper. "Guy will afford an establishment —— if he gets the young lady. She has five-and-twenty thousand pounds —to be paid down on her wedding-day."

"Are you speaking of the mother or the daughter?"

"Well done, Joan! The mother is double Guy's age—or getting on for it. I said on the wedding-day."

"But—will—she, the daughter, have Guy?" slowly and doubtfully ejaculated Miss Pomeroy.

Rupert opened another of the narrow casements, and put his head out. He whistled to one of his pointers, which was frolicing below with the gamekeeper, Gaunt.

"Rupert! Rupert!" exclaimed his sister, petulantly, "you know when I want to hear a thing I must hear it. I say, will Alice Wylde accept Guy?"

Rupert drew in his head. "You had better ask that of Guy himself."

"Is it true that she will have so large a sum?"

"That's true. Her father was in India: a nabob—or rajah—or merchant—something they make fortunes at, out there: and she inherits. There'll be another twenty-five thousand when her mother dies: or more."

"She will never have Guy: she is too beautiful."

"Pretty women often marry ugly men, and——hush!" broke off Rupert: "here he comes, the son-and-heir."

Guy Pomeroy was heard outside, talking. His temper had made him not loved by his brothers and sisters, over whom he assumed too much authority. But the lord doted on him. In Guy he saw his son-and-heir: and his constant allusions to Guy's being such, had caused the rest to apply the term to Guy derisively. Haughty, arrogant, and fearful spendthrifts, the Pomeroys, from the lord downwards, had outrun their income; but this was not known to the world; and Guy, between whom and his father there existed entire confidence, had reached the age of eight-and-twenty without thought of marrying. "You must wait until I'm gone, Guy," the lord sometimes said to him; "you'll have the whole then." But while things were in this state, the White House changed its tenants, and became inhabited by the rich widow and daughter of Mr. Wylde.

But not for the sake of her fortune did Guy Pomeroy think of sacrificing his liberty: that the money may have added weight to the inducement, was probable, but the fresh beauty of Alice Wylde had caught his eye and heart. When those cold natures, such as Guy's, do love, they love passionately: and, with an impassioned fervour that is not often equalled, had Guy Pomeroy learnt to love Alice Wylde. Rupert did not explain this to his sister; he parried her questions, and seemed to treat the whole as a joke to be laughed at.

"I hear George has been at home again," she resumed.

"George? Yes, he came soon after you left home, I think; he stayed for some months."

"I wonder he likes to idle away so much of his time—and I wonder he gets the leave to do it," remarked Joan. "He cannot find much amusement here, I should think. But George was always idly inclined, and down here he is of course relieved from duty."

As she spoke, Guy Pomeroy entered. Joan went up to him and

they kissed each other: they had not previously met since her return. Guy took his seat at the breakfast-table, and motioned to her to do the same.

"Guy," she began, as she obeyed him, with little regard to his feelings or to her own good manners, "Rupert says you wish to marry Miss Wylde. Will she have you?"

A hot flush illumined Guy's white cheek; proving, of itself, how very deep his love had gone. He drew himself up haughtily.

"Let Rupert concern himself with his fishing and his shooting, and his other—more questionable—sports: but let him not concern himself with me."

He rang the bell as he spoke; Rupert, still looking from the casement, appeared not to hear. Jerome came in, the lord's personal attendant; a faithful serving-man over fifty years old.

"The lord breakfasts in his room," said Guy.

"Yes sir, I know it," replied Jerome. "He has slept badly."

Joan was busy with the breakfast-table. She could not domineer over Guy, as she did over Rupert: not that the latter heeded her domineering, for he was good-tempered and careless. Once, when Guy had declined to tell her something she wished to know, and she had teased him to anger, he struck her. She said no more now about Alice Wylde, but let the conversation drift to general subjects, and the breakfast passed in peace.

The meal over, she went up to her father. A grand, tall, old man, with a grey, handsome face, and grey hair. Now that Joan saw him by daylight, she noticed how ill and worn he looked. He was slowly eating his breakfast at a small round table drawn to the fire in his own sitting-room.

"Papa, you don't look well."

"No? I can't get over that last attack of mine, child."

"And you have a fire! It is a very warm day."

"I never feel warm now. There, let my ailments alone, Joan. Talk of something else."

"Papa, is Guy to marry Alice Wylde?"

The lord looked up. "Who has made you so wise?"

"Rupert."

"It is no business of Rupert's."

"Papa, I do not suppose she would have Guy."

"Not have Guy! I can tell you that an alliance with the future Lord of Pomeroy is what many a young lady, far higher in position and lineage than she, would kneel for. She and Mrs. Wylde see it in the right light, and are eager for it. Do you think that so strange a thing, Joan?"

"Well, papa, you know that Guy is stern of manner and not much liked in general. And one so rich and beautiful as Miss Wylde can choose as she will."

"But Guy will be Lord of Pomeroy. To be his wife, is what a

daughter of the highest noble in the land would covet. And Guy will make a good husband—unless I am mistaken. At any rate, Joan, the matter lies entirely with himself and Miss Wylde: it is scarcely seemly that you should thus comment upon it."

"I'm sure, papa, I wish Guy every happiness," replied Joan, her eyes filling at the reproof. "If he and Miss Wylde like one another, I could desire nothing better."

"Guy likes her; be very sure of that. And, if Mrs. Wylde is to be believed, the daughter likes him. And now you may leave me, my dear: I am expecting Father Andrew."

As Joan went out of the room, she met him. He wore his priestly garments, by which Joan knew that he was going in for some office of religion. Father Andrew's face, a pleasant, rubicund face at all times, brightened at the sight of her. He was a stout man, of middle height, and of some five-and-forty years.

"Welcome home, my child. We have been dull without you."

"Father," she whispered, after responding to his greeting, "do you think papa is seriously ill? He looks so changed."

"He is weaker than I like to see him; that's a fact. But that last fit of gout was a sharp one, and tried him terribly."

"But that was three months ago."

"True. Still, he has never seemed quite the same since. And he is not cautious enough as to what he takes. Poor living does not suit the Pomeroys. However, let us hope that he will get up his strength shortly."

Father Andrew passed into the lord's room, and Joan went about her business in the abbey. Visiting the housekeeper, Mrs. Rex, and other of the upper servants, and superintending the putting away of her own wardrobe—which she liked to do, rather than leave it entirely to her maid. What with one thing and another, she was pretty busy until luncheon-time. Early in the afternoon, she called Bridget—who was the housekeeper's niece and a favourite servant.

"I want you to go as far as the lodge," she said. "Tell Sybilla—tell Miss Gaunt that I am come home; though I daresay she has heard it. Give my love to her and ask her to come up to see me."

Away went Bridget on her errand. She was soon back again; for the lodge was only just beyond the village.

"Miss Gaunt's kind love and duty to you, Miss Joan; but she has one of her bad headaches this afternoon, and is not able to wait on you," was the message Bridget brought. And Joan Pomeroy's usually placid features took a momentary cross expression—for she liked Sybilla Gaunt and was fond of her occasional companionship.

The family dined alone. Not in the great dining-hall below, but with all the usual state and ceremony pertaining to the Pomeroys. The lord headed his table and Joan faced him; Guy and Rupert being on either side. To be alone at dinner was rather an unusual

circumstance; for the abbey was fond of guests, though it might be but Father Andrew. But the lord was losing his energy, and of late seemed not to care how much he was left in quiet. With the removal of the cloth, Joan quitted the room. Rupert followed her, and strolled out. Guy remained with his father.

"Where have you been all the afternoon?" demanded the lord. "At the White House?"

"I called there," replied Guy.

"When do you mean to bring matters to a close? It seems to me that you are holding off unaccountably. Speak to her off-hand, Guy, and don't be afraid. I never knew that a Pomeroy could be scared by a woman."

Guy Pomeroy's livid face turned scarlet; a far deeper scarlet than that called up by Joan's bold question in the morning. If the proud old chief could but have known its cause!

"There is plenty of time," replied Guy, evasively.

"As you please, Guy. I thought your heart was set upon the match. I'm sure I don't wish to urge it, if you don't."

"Time enough," muttered Guy. "Father, drink claret; so much port is not good for you."

"I hate claret," said the lord; "not a drop should be on my table, but for fashion's sake. I never could get used to it as a young man, and I can't as an old one. In my day, Guy, the creed was to despise everything French."

"But think of the gout, sir. Jerome is fearing another attack."

"Jerome would fear his own shadow," said the Lord of Pomeroy.

Meanwhile, Rupert strolled leisurely along, just as though he had no object in life save to look about him; but when he was beyond view of the abbey, he mended his pace, and went as if he were walking for a wager. It was a lovely summer's evening, and the setting sun threw its red and golden light athwart the heavy trees in the distance. Crossing some fields, by a sheltered path, he emerged from them at the back of the White House, and entered its garden by a small door.

Not to the open part of it: no, Rupert Pomeroy dared not do that, lest he should encounter the lynx eyes of Mrs. Wylde. He kept amidst the clump of shrubs that skirted the wall, and peeped out beyond them to see what was to be seen.

He saw a bright, radiant-looking girl, her dark brown hair shining in the slanting beams of the sun, and her cheeks damask with expectation. She was in an evening dress of white, and wore a small thin gold chain round her neck, and similar bracelets on her arms; and she was flitting from bed to bed, plucking a flower from one, stooping to inhale the scent of another, and—drawing further from the windows of the house: drawing, as if unconsciously, and without any apparent design. Just in the same manner, you observe, that Mr. Rupert Pomeroy had drawn away from the abbey.

Rupert Pomeroy, talking with his sister, had said the late Mr. Wylde had been something in India—a nabob, or rajah, or merchant —something at which people made fortunes. In point of fact, Mr. Wylde had not been any one of the three: he had been a railway contractor. The greater portion of his fortune was made at home; though he did go out to India, and died there. Of his large fortune, twenty-five thousand pounds were left to his daughter, to be paid to her on her marriage; and the rest (which was something like another twenty-five thousand doubled) would be hers on the death of his wife.

Mrs. Wylde and Alice came home from India—having accompanied Mr. Wylde thither—conscious of possessing more riches than they well knew how to count. The contractor had been a close man as to his means, and the wife had never supposed that he was worth a tithe of what those means turned out to be. Being so wealthy, it was of course incumbent on the widow to set-up her tent accordingly; so looked out for some pleasant locality where Roman Catholics congregated—for the Wyldes were of that persuasion—and was directed to Abbeyland. Mrs. Wylde took upon long lease the White House, which belonged to the Pomeroys, and settled down in it.

They were very pleasant people, this widow and daughter; the latter was also lovely; and Guy and Rupert Pomeroy called upon and paid court to their new tenants. Rumours of the girl's great wealth got about, and the Lord of Pomeroy began to pay them attention himself. Guy's heart, hitherto invulnerable, fell before the charms of the young lady; the lord read the signs, and favoured the project. He was a proud old man, and the Wyldes were nobodies; but money was wanted at Pomeroy, and he put the riches against the lack of descent. "One can't have everything nowadays," he remarked to Guy.

The lord, when speaking to Joan, had used the right term with regard to Mrs. Wylde—she was "eager" for the match. Mrs. Wylde's husband had not much to boast of in the way of descent; she had as little; was, in short, of no "descent" whatever. As a matter of course—at least, it is a matter of course with many such people—she was most inordinately alive to the advantages of rank. Her own turn was over; she could not be other than she was; but to see Alice wed into a noble family was her first earthly ambition: and when the heir of Pomeroy permitted himself to show indication that he was paying court to Alice, her exultation knew no bounds. Once let Alice become his wife, and Mrs. Wylde would fold her hands in contentment and sit down upon her laurels for life.

What though Guy Pomeroy was stern of mien and plain of face?—as Alice remonstrated. "Look at him from a little distance," said Mrs. Wylde, "and where else would you find so handsome a form, so noble a man?—it was only when you were close to him that

you perceived his lip had a little defect in it, and his face was somewhat pale."

"Yes," answered Alice again, "but wives did not look at husbands from a distance; they passed their days close to them."

However, she might have been tempted to take Guy, for she was just as great a worshipper of rank as her mother, and no doubt would have taken him, but for one unfortunate circumstance—she had fallen in love with his brother Rupert.

And Mrs. Wylde saw nothing of the mischief until it was done. We rarely suspect the treason that goes on under our very eyes. Rupert and Guy were alike equally welcomed to the White House: metaphorically, Mrs. Wylde worshipped anybody bearing the name of Pomeroy. Rupert and Alice had plenty of time and opportunity given them to fall in love with one another.

But suddenly, without the slightest warning, Mrs. Wylde saw something one day, or thought she saw it, that she did not approve of—something like a private understanding between her daughter and Rupert: and a faint and very disagreeable suspicion dawned upon her that Alice might be getting to enjoy the society of the handsome Rupert more than that of Guy. Alice made a joke of her mother's "fancy," as she called it, denying it utterly; and Mrs. Wylde was fain to be appeased. But the incident taught her caution: and from that hour Rupert Pomeroy's visits to the house were discouraged. Call when he would, he could not get admittance: the ladies were out, or the ladies were engaged.

Alice Wylde had not been well trained. Anything but that. Whether she was by nature self-willed and deceitful, or whether present circumstances were imparting those qualities to her, cannot be known. Vain to a fault, was she; passionately fond of admiration; and, with it all, a perfect coquette.

Nearly from the very first she had detected the heir of Pomeroy's serious feeling for her. It gratified her beyond everything. *She drew him on;* flirting, laughing, talking; playing off her pretty airs and graces upon him. It may be, that she did not know what she was doing—what drawing him on to; it may be that she deemed his feelings might be shallow as her own—if, indeed, hers were shallow—and that if his wings did get a little singed in the radiant light of her presence, they would soon heal again. It may be, too, that she changed her tactics in a degree as the love grew between her and Rupert; and that if she did not absolutely repress Guy, she did not continue to give him encouragement.

The Lord of Pomeroy gave a word of reproach to his son Guy at the dinner-table, for not pursuing more ardently his suit with Miss Wylde. Guy's face had flushed hot with emotion, and Guy had turned the subject off. He had cause to do both.

That very afternoon Guy Pomeroy had staked his die and lost it: he had offered himself to Alice Wylde, and been refused.

"You must accept me; you have led me to think that you would," pleaded Guy, in his shock of surprise. "I love you too passionately to lose you."

But Alice only said he was mistaken, and rejected him utterly. She gave him no hope whatever; on the contrary, she forbade him to think of hope then or ever. And the heir of Pomeroy left the house a mortified and (so far as his hopes went) a crushed man.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

Mrs. Wylde chanced to be from home during the visit of Guy Pomeroy, just spoken of, and knew nothing of what had transpired; neither was it disclosed to her, then or later. Her carriage drove in late, close upon the dinner hour; she hastened to dress, and then joined her daughter in the drawing-room.

"Does Mr. Pomeroy dine here?" enquired Mrs. Wylde, who was a little, fair woman, with cold light eyes and very light hair, and wore this evening a maize-coloured net dress with Indian ornaments.

"No, mamma."

"But I told you, Alice, to invite him if he called."

"I really forget whether I asked him or not," said Alice, indifferently. "I fancy I did not."

"You appear to be growing very forgetful of late," returned Mrs. Wylde. "Dinner, Cannet? That's right: I am fearfully hungry."

Mrs. Wylde liked her dinner: there was always a good one at the White House, whether on feast days or meagre days: and her vexation at Alice's indifference and the absence of Guy Pomeroy was soon forgotten. She began talking of the law-business which had called her to the distant county town.

"Miss Pomeroy is come home," observed Alice.

"Is she? When did she come?"

"Last night, I think he said."

"Who said?"

"Mr. Pomeroy."

"We will walk over to-morrow and see her."

Dinner over, and dessert begun, Alice took a little fruit, and then, quitting the table without ceremony or apology, passed out at the glass doors, which stood open to the warm air and setting sun. You have already seen her: for this was spoken of before: in her white dress, with the gold circlets on her neck and arms, and the damask colour of expectation on her cheeks.

"Alice," called out Mrs. Wylde, "I wish you would put a scarf over your shoulders, and take a parasol. You generally choose this hour for loitering in the garden, when the sun is full upon it."

"Mamma, I shall not take cold."

"I don't suppose you will. I was not thinking of cold: but you'll tan your neck. The hot sun of summer tans as much at its setting as at mid-day."

Alice Wylde folded her lace pocket-handkerchief, and threw it over her neck.

"You have not taken your wine," pursued Mrs. Wylde.

"I don't want it, mamma. I took some at dinner."

Alice buried her face in a rose-tree as she spoke, inhaling its perfume. Mrs. Wylde took the glass of port wine which she had poured out for Alice, and drank it herself. Mrs. Wylde thought it wrong to waste good wine, and she was very fond of port. She liked to take two or three glasses of it after dinner, and then to fall, when alone, into a comfortable doze. Thus, on these favourable opportunities, as Alice considered them, on these evenings when they were not on ceremony, Alice got at least an hour to herself to linger in the garden, to look at the rising moon, and listen to the nightingales.

Well for her—oh, more than well, if she had seen and listened to nothing else! Strolling from flower to flower, she drew gradually more and more away from the house, turned the corner to the grove of shrubs and trees, and was lost to sight. Mrs. Wylde had forgotten to think about her then, and was deep in rose-coloured visions of that desirable time when she should shoot up a few feet on the world's pinnacle, as the mother of the Lady of Pomeroy.

Amidst the friendly, sheltering trees stood Rupert. Opening his arms he drew Alice to him. "My dearest!"

"Oh, Rupert, I thought this evening would never come! I have so wanted to see you, and—and—tell you something. That is, if it would not be wrong to do it. I hardly know."

"Wrong to do it—to tell me anything!" he returned. "What can you know, Alice, that you may not share with me?"

"I will tell you; yes, I will: but you must never, never let it transpire that you do know it. It would be cruel to him."

"To whom?"

"Guy. He came this afternoon to ask me to be his wife."

Rupert received the news with equanimity: perhaps the young lady had thought he would be moved by it. "Well?" said he, "what was your answer?"

"I told him I was sorry, but that I did not love him, and it was of no use his asking me to."

Rupert laughed. He had his arm round her waist. "What did Guy say to that?"

"I hardly know what he said. My mind was in a whirl and I did not catch his words—only their sense. He said he loved me as no other man had loved woman, for his passions were vehement within him, and it was I alone who had ever called them forth."

"You might have told him that *one* other, at any rate, loved you as passionately as he."

"He then spoke about being Guy Pomeroy of Pomeroy, and ——"

Rupert threw back his head. "That's Guy all over. Of course he is that: but he need not enlarge upon it. How did it end?"

"He would not take my refusal. He did not seem to believe in it. He said young ladies rarely knew their own minds; that I had had no experience; and that he should never give me up while he had life. But I think, for all that, he did believe me, Rupert."

"Of course he did. You must keep him at a distance now."

"He said he should come to the White House as usual, and he hoped that I should in a few weeks grant him a different answer."

"And pray what did you say to that?"

"Nothing. Except that if he did continue to come he must consider himself entirely mamma's visitor, not mine."

Rupert bent his face until his cheek touched hers while he whispered his sweet vows of love. She resisted not: for, passionately as Guy Pomeroy loved Alice, did she in her turn love Rupert. Whether Mr. Rupert's affection was very ardent is doubtful, for he had paid such vows many a time before. Rupert Pomeroy was a general admirer of pretty women; and it often happens that those general admirers are not capable of that one pure, ardent passion which can stir man's heart but once. He loved Alice Wylde in his own fashion; quite sufficiently so to make her his wife. He hoped she would be his wife; though he did not see his way clear to make her so at present; for Mrs. Wylde would be dead against him, and so would be the Lord of Pomeroy. The lord favoured Guy's suit, he would but resent his, Rupert's; the lord wanted Guy to be happy and rich. Guy, if he must marry, needed money with his wife: but Guy did not need money half as much as Rupert did.

Rupert drew her arm within his, and they paced the narrow sheltered walk. Alice took courage to ask Rupert what his future prospects were. Rupert replied vaguely. They did not appear to be at all tangible: but he was of sanguine spirit, and talked glowingly, as one who meant to set the Thames on fire. Thus the time passed, all too swiftly for them. Wrapt in the magic of each other's presence, in the melody of love's golden chords, they saw not how swiftly the light was fading; and the sun had set, and the evening star shone in the heavens, when Alice awoke to reality.

"Oh Rupert! see how late it is! What a long while we must have been walking here! What will mamma say?"

"Nothing. Your mamma is yet in her after-dinner nap."

"I don't know that. I have never stayed so late as this."

"You have had more to tell me than you ever had before."

"To tell you?"

"Guy's presumption. Well, we must check-mate him; though it may take time to do it. Fare you well for to-night, my best and dearest."

Alice stole back to the house, not by the open lawn, but by a side

path, her heart living over again the stolen interview, her cheeks crimson with the pressure of Rupert's lips.

"Tiresome old creature!—he's always doing it!"

Now the words, fretfully spoken, did not apply to him who was filling her thoughts, Rupert Pomeroy, but to that worthy man, Cannet, the butler. Alice had made her way to a convenient side-door, and found it fastened. It chanced, however, that Cannet was close by at the moment she tried it; he unbolted it and threw it open.

"I never saw any one like you in my life, Cannet!—bolting and barring the doors at this hour, as if you feared we were going to be robbed! An evening or two ago, in the broad sunshine, I tried this door and found it locked."

"I'm very sorry, Miss Alice. But there's a lot of tramps about; there always is in hot weather, and it's right to be cautious."

"As if tramps would come now! They would let it get dark first."

Cannet knew that the twilight hour was just the one favoured by tramps; but he did not say so. Alice went into the drawing-room; played softly for a minute or two, and then crossed the hall to the dining-room—startling her mother from her doze. The long drive had tired Mrs. Wylde.

"Why, mamma, what a sleep you are taking!"

"Am I! What's the time? Dear me, why it's getting dusk. Why did you not wake me before, Alice? Where have you been?"

"I came here from the piano—wondering what had become of you."

Mrs. Wylde rang the bell, and then quitted the room with her daughter. Alice sat down again to the piano, and the tea came in.

And poor Mrs. Wylde, stirring and tasting it, had no more notion of the treason that had been enacted, than you have that you are going to be made a duke to-morrow, my good reader. Ah, girls think themselves very clever, those who can act thus; but let them be assured that a day of reckoning must come. Alice Wylde saw no harm in deceiving her mother, or in the deceit itself—but that same day of reckoning might be laying up its vengeance even for her.

Mrs. Wylde, having attained a position in the great world, of course deemed it necessary to borrow its manners and customs. Time was, not so very long ago either, when she saw no necessity to keep a maid for her personal service; but now she kept two maids, one for herself, the other for her daughter. As Alice went into her room this night, the latter was waiting for her as usual. She was a respectable looking, plain-dressing woman of thirty; her hair, already slightly grey, was braided over her forehead; her face was thoughtful and sensible. In the earlier days this girl had been the housemaid. She was good and faithful; and of their own religion. Mrs. Wylde took her to India, and afterwards she became Alice's attendant, of whom she was very fond.

"What's the matter, Theresa?" asked Alice: for the servant had

her cheek bent upon her hands. "Is your tooth aching again? Why don't you go to the town and have it taken out?"

"And so I would," said Theresa, "if I were sure it was the tooth. I think it is—what's that fine new name?—neuralgia."

Alice laughed. "Neuralgia is as old as I am, Theresa."

"Well, miss, we have always said rheumatism. That was fine enough for us. Shall I begin your hair, Miss Alice?"

Alice was standing at the open window, gazing outwards. The moon was riding in the sky, the few stars that were out twinkled in their course: beneath, lay the grass-plat and the sweet flowers, and beyond rose the grove that had sheltered her and Rupert. Lost in memory, Alice stood on, oblivious of there being any such duties as undressing. Theresa waited, mentally debating whether she should speak of a certain matter that was troubling her, or whether she should not.

"Mamma's as tired as she can be," began Alice, her thoughts wandering to her mother. "It is a long drive; and she says she felt quite weary with the deeds the lawyer had to read to her."

"It is a good long way to Owlstone, miss—there and back."

"Mamma slept till tea-time, and then was angry with me for not awaking her. I was in the garden. And what a stupid thing that Cannet is!—locking all the doors by daylight!"

Now it seemed to Theresa—who was reflective, conscientious, and a little given to be swayed by signs and symptoms—that her young mistress must have unconsciously opened out this very subject on purpose to afford her an excuse for speaking: and she seized upon it. Walking nearer to the window, she began in a low tone.

"I saw you there, Miss Alice."

"Saw me—where?" returned Alice, rather sharply.

"Out yonder, Miss Alice: down by the grove. Mr. Rupert Pomeroy was with you."

Alice was silent. This avowal was very awkward.

"*How* could you have seen me?" she presently asked, the question occurring to her. "Where were you, Theresa?"

"I went to the herb-bed: some of them downstairs said that a fomentation of hot sage-leaves to my cheek would ease the pain: and this," nodding at the broad gravel path beneath, "is the nearest way, so I took the liberty of taking it. I saw you as I turned the corner, Miss Alice; you stood with your backs to me, both you and Mr. Rupert. He had his arm round your waist."

"Dear me, had he?"—after a rather dismayed pause. "He is very thoughtless. We were talking about something or other, I suppose. But now, Theresa, don't you go telling this to mamma."

"Miss Alice," said the woman, gravely, "I came to your papa's house when you were but a little girl, and there was but two servants in all; and I have watched you grow up, and I have got fonder of you and prouder of you year by year. But, oh, my dear young lady

—and for the reason I've just given, perhaps you'll let me say it —it is not right to be so familiar with Mr. Rupert when you are to marry Mr. Pomeroy."

"You stupid thing, Theresa! Who told you, pray, that I was to marry Mr. Pomeroy?"

"My mistress told me."

"Just like mamma!—fancying a thing must come to pass because she wishes it! Well now, the truth is, Theresa—and I don't mind telling it you, but you must take care not to repeat it again to mamma—that I am *not* going to marry Mr. Pomeroy."

"Then, Miss Alice, why not tell your mamma so?"

"I shall tell mamma in good time. But I'm sure you know there'll be no living in the house with her for a week afterwards. She has set her mind upon Mr. Pomeroy; and she will be ready to box my ears when she finds I won't have him."

"But, Miss Alice—you have encouraged Mr. Pomeroy," debated Theresa, feeling less sure and less easy upon the point than she chose to say. "He comes often: he stayed with you in the drawing-room for nearly an hour to-day."

"I can't help his staying—or his coming. Mamma was out, and I had to go to him. Don't you be silly, Theresa. I tell you I am not going to take the Heir of Pomeroy. And he knows that I am not."

"Trouble of this kind is more easy to get into than to get out of, Miss Alice," resumed Theresa in a low, persuasive tone. "I confess I like Mr. Rupert better than I like Mr. Pomeroy; though it's not for me to presume to speak of my likes or dislikes. I would only just say this, my dear young lady: *don't deceive anybody*, especially your mother. If you don't like Mr. Pomeroy, and don't wish to have him, tell out the truth at once. 'Tis the safest way in the long run."

"There, you can do my hair now, Theresa. And don't worry your silly old head with what does not concern it. Things will come all right in what you call the long run, as you will find."

Leaving Alice to chatter to Theresa upon less embarrassing subjects, we will go after Rupert Pomeroy.

Passing through the convenient side gate to the shady lane on which it opened, went he, gay as a lark, humming the bars of some popular song. Rupert Pomeroy was of an essentially gay, sanguine, light temperament: he had never been grave in his life for two minutes together. The branches of the trees on either side this lane met overhead; glancing up, he saw the moonbeams flickering through them—a pleasant sight; and he broke out into his song again.

"Oh, 'tis sweet when the moon is beaming
To rove through the shady grove:
Oh, 'tis sweet when the world is sleeping
To list to the nightingale's song."

"Don't think that's quite right," broke off Rupert, alluding to

the words. "Think the nightingale's song goes with the moonbeams. Wish she could have stayed out longer—that 'sweet love o' mine.'"

Before quite reaching the village, he turned aside to the left. Standing at some little distance from the road was an exceedingly pretty dwelling-house, not much larger indeed than a cottage; its rough stone walls were covered with ivy, jessamine and roses encircled its casements. You might have been puzzled to guess to what social class its inmates belonged; in all, save its size, it might have been the abode of a gentleman. Iron railings, covered with clematis, enclosed a small garden, its grass-plat and flower-beds not less well kept than were those of Mrs. Wylde. The gate was in the middle of the rails, a path leading straight from it to the cottage porch. It was the dwelling of the game-keeper, Gaunt, and it was called the Lodge. John Gaunt—who was not a regular game-keeper and who will have to be spoken of later—lived in it with his only child, a daughter. Leaning over the gate in the moonlight stood the daughter now. Rupert saw her and turned aside.

"I thought it must be you, Sybilla," spoke he in his ready, free way. "What in the world have you got on?"

She laughed slightly, and pushed off the shawl in which her head was enveloped. "I have a little cold," she answered, "and my head has been aching all day."

"By the way—yes. Joan mentioned at dinner that she had sent for you, and you were too ill to come," observed Rupert, who remained on the outer side of the gate. "What was the matter?"

A hot flush and a slight contraction of the brow, not discernible in the moonlight, passed suddenly over her face, apparently called up by Rupert's words. Sybilla Gaunt was a magnificent girl, tall, dignified, upright; with a no less magnificent face: her features regally beautiful, her hair of a purple black; and her large eyes of a deep, dark violet. But, with all her natural beauty, the face looked to-night strangely wan and haggard.

"My head pained me so," she replied slightly and evasively. "How is the lord, Mr. Rupert?"

"Oh, he is very well."

"My father thinks him much changed of late. He was at the Abbey yesterday morning—the lord had sent to him about those preserves beyond the hill. He says he never saw anyone change so rapidly for the worse as the lord is changing now."

"So Joan thinks—but she has not seen him for eight months, you know. I hope he will be all right again soon, Sybilla. Where is your father to-night?"

"He went up to Whittaker's. Do you want him?"

Without giving any direct answer, Rupert Pomeroy bent his head closer to Sybilla's over the gate, and began talking to her in a very low tone—just as if he feared some eavesdropper might be hidden under the clematis. As we cannot hear what he said, the conversa-

tion must remain a secret. Sybilla gave an answering word, or a nod, now and again; the tears meanwhile gathering on her eyelashes, and she, half stealthily, wiping them away from time to time.

"Who's this?" suddenly cried Rupert, drawing away from the gate, his ear having caught the sound of footsteps close at hand. "Take courage, Sybilla."

They were the steps of Gaunt himself. A very tall and noble-looking man, dressed in a velveteen coat and breeches and dark leggings. His features were just as handsome as his daughter's, the two faces in fact were much alike; the same the noble cast of countenance, the same the fine, open, straightforward expression. As he came into view, Sybilla nodded to Rupert, and went in.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Rupert? Did you want me?"

"No; I was only saying good-evening to Sybilla, seeing her standing here as I was going by. She says you think my father much changed."

"And so he is, Mr. Rupert; there's no doubt of it. Unless he gets to look better, I—I shall hardly know what to fear. Will you walk in?"

"Not to-night. I say, Gaunt, what about dragging that fish-pond?"

"The very thing I have just been up to Whittaker's about, Mr. Rupert. We had decided to do it to-morrow, but your brother sent me word this evening that it must be put off until the next day."

"What for, I wonder?"

"He is going out, I believe, to-morrow."

"What of that?"

"Well, he says he wishes to be present when it's done."

"Oh, does he? It will come, next, that nobody must stir hand or foot on the property without his leave. You'll see that, Gaunt."

Gaunt slightly smiled. "He is the son-and-heir, you know, Mr. Rupert."

"We all know that: he takes care we don't forget it. So be it; I do not see that it matters much to us. It has pleased my father to exalt Guy ever since his babyhood, and of course he has grown domineering. Good-night to you, Gaunt."

John Gaunt stood a moment after Rupert left, thinking of his last words. He did not himself much like Guy Pomeroy, and wondered how he should get on with him when he came into power, and whether he should feel inclined then to act as keeper. He and the lord had ever been on the best of terms; almost friends.

"Better not anticipate," thought Gaunt, as he turned in doors.

Sybilla sat at the frugal supper-table, the shawl well wrapped about her shoulders. John Gaunt sat down and helped himself. Sybilla took a morsel upon her plate, and pretended to eat: but it was evident that she had little inclination for it.

"No appetite again, Sybilla?"

Her face flushed. "The heat makes me feel languid, father. And my head has ached to-day."

Nanny, the old serving woman, came in to remove the tray when they had finished. Gaunt rose and took down one of his small stock of books. It was a volume of Virgil—for the man was a man of education.

"I will say good-night, dear father," said Sybilla, advancing to him. "My head will get better in bed."

"Good-night, my dear one," he said, fondly kissing her. "May the holy saints have you in their keeping!"

The first thing Sybilla did upon entering her chamber—a small, pretty room, whose casement looked towards the White House—was to let the cumbersome shawl slip from her shoulders, fall upon her knees before the crucifix that hung opposite her bed, and burst into tears. Tears? Nay; that is hardly the proper word. Sobs, rather. Passionate, grievous sobs; suppressed only lest they should be heard below.

"It is getting more than I can bear," she wailed in a piteous tone. "Who will break it to him?—who will break it to him? My dear, loving, trusting father—who has ever deemed that I and deceit were as far divided as ——"

A very paroxysm of grief broke off the words. After a few moments' yielding to it, Sybilla grew calmer. Folding her hands together, she raised her eyes imploringly to the crucifix, as if seeking for that comfort above, which, as it seemed, she could not find here.

Meanwhile, Rupert Pomeroy, after calling in at Whittaker's—who was the keeper under Gaunt—and on sundry other people, for he made himself at home in the village with high and low, at length reached home. It was late. Jerome met him.

"All in bed?" asked Rupert.

"All but Mr. Guy, sir. He has not gone to his room yet."

"Where is he?"

"In the oak-room, walking about. I'm afraid something has vexed him."

"Why do you fear that?"

"Just hark at his steps, Mr. Rupert. To walk like that is not usual with Mr. Guy."

Rupert paused to listen. Guy's heavy tread sounded from the oak-room, unceasing and monotonous.

"He must be doing penance," remarked Rupert, with a light laugh.

"He has been pacing there these two hours, sir, ever since the lord retired. Just that same sharp, measured tread that you hear now."

"Well, good-night to you, Jerome," returned Rupert, as he went on to his chamber. And he smiled again to himself as he entered it.

"You can't have quite everything your own way, Guy my brother,

although you are the son-and-heir," spoke Rupert, mentally. "Alice Wylde is not for you—and you will do well to make the best and worst of her refusal, and think no more about it."

CHAPTER III.

THE KEEPER'S DAUGHTER.

THE state entrance door of the abbey lies on the left as you go in under the great gateway. This admits you to a quaint but, in its way, magnificent hall, from which a fine old staircase winds upwards. A similar entrance-door lies on the right of the porte-cochère—if we may borrow a term from the French—leading into a similar hall and to a similar staircase; but at present this other entrance is kept locked, not being used. The Lords of Pomeroy generally use the one first mentioned; and just now there is no second household at the abbey.

Ascending this first-mentioned staircase, which is lined with pictures, you come into a wide corridor, which has a few pictures also hung in it, between the many entrance-doors of the front and back chambers. At the end of the corridor is the south tower: for these rooms are on the right of the entrance gates, looking eastward. It has been already said that the abbey faces the east. As a rule, the rooms are not large; rather, in fact, confined; but dark, ancient, and handsome. The present lord, who keeps up a vast deal of unnecessary state, and whose retainers are numerous, occupies the whole of the front pile, together with a portion of the north wing; but the rooms on the other side the entrance gates have not been much used since the death of the Lady of Pomeroy some years ago, and especially since the lord fell into poor health.

The bed-rooms all face the quadrangle; most of the sitting-rooms face the sea and the open country: and in one of these sitting-rooms, on the morning following the day already mentioned, sits Miss Joan. It is the room next the south tower, is called the "purple room" from the colour of its furniture and hangings, and is the particular sitting-room of Joan. Joan has attended early mass in the chapel, has written some letters, has gone her usual rounds connected with the household, and is now preparing to sit down and sew. Joan Pomeroy is great at embroidery, and she is beginning to "work," as she calls it, a delicate cambric frock for one of Mrs. Capel's children: or, strictly speaking, an expected one. She feels rather more easy on the score of her father's health than she felt yesterday, for the lord got up to breakfast this morning and looked better.

"Can it be twelve o'clock already!" exclaimed Joan, as the great clock of the quadrangle began to ring out mid-day, and various other clocks in the abbey followed suit. "How I must have wasted my time this morning! It was that batch of letters."

Bending her head as the last words left her lips, she regarded her work attentively. A very small portion of it was as yet done.

"But that I have begun it, I would choose the other pattern," she remarked. "It was much less elaborate; it would not have taken more than half the time to work. Suppose I should not get this done in time?—and I have always given the babies their baptismal robe! Perhaps Sybilla can help me. I will send and ask her to stay the day ——"

"Mrs. and Miss Wylde," interrupted one of the footmen, as he threw wide open the door.

Joan rose, full of dignity. Truth to say, she had not much liked either Mrs. or Miss Wylde when she made their acquaintance before leaving home. Joan had a prejudice in favour of high lineage—and these ladies did not possess it. It was not the lack of that, however, but something in themselves she remembered she disliked: on the other hand, and Joan was candid enough to admit this, she had seen too little of them to judge fairly. And, if the future lord was to marry the young lady, Joan knew that she ought to put prejudice behind her.

"I *will* like them: I daresay I shall if I try to," passed through her mind as they entered.

"Will Miss Pomeroy pardon this early visit?" began Mrs. Wylde, as she held out her hand. "Between near neighbours—and in a remote country district—mid-day visits are, I believe, allowable. I had, moreover, a special object in coming thus early."

"I am very glad to see you; it is not at all too early," answered Joan, cordially, as she gave them her hand.

"What a lovely pattern!" exclaimed Mrs. Wylde, her eyes falling on the embroidery as she sat down.

"I am pleased to hear you say so. I was rather regretting that I had begun it: it is so intricate, and will take so long."

"But it will be very beautiful when done. It is for an infant's frock?"

"For the little one that my sister, Mrs. Capel, is expecting."

"What a long while you stayed away, Miss Pomeroy!"

"My visits are generally pretty long when I go to her. The children do not like to part with me. But I should have returned before this had I thought papa was so ill."

"Is the lord ill?" cried Mrs. Wylde, quickly.

"He does not acknowledge it, but I am sure he must be. His looks betray it. And it seems to me that he has no spirits left; no energy."

"I have observed that myself," said Mrs. Wylde.

"He has not looked well since the attack of gout," put in Alice, nearly the first words she had spoken. "The Lord of Pomeroy has been very kind to me always; and I hope, I *hope*, he will soon grow strong again."

She spoke with earnestness, laying a stress upon the second "hope." Joan looked at her with a smile, pleased at the expression of feeling. With her dimpled cheeks, her radiant brown eyes, her bright and pure complexion, Alice was indeed beautiful, and Joan did not wonder at Guy's infatuation.

"But I have not explained the object of my coming at this unseemly hour," resumed Mrs. Wylde. "I want to take you back with me to the White House for the day, Miss Pomeroy."

"Oh, thank you; but I—could not go," said Joan, quickly.

"But why?"

"For one thing, papa is so poorly—at least, in appearance—that I do not like to leave him."

"Oh, I hope you will not disappoint us, dear Miss Pomeroy! Look at Alice: how eagerly she is awaiting your consent!"

The pretty blushing face was indeed full of hope as it turned on Joan. It was so pretty, so loving, that Joan could hardly keep her eyes from it; and she began to think that Alice would be a very nice wife indeed for Guy, and to wish to know more of her.

"I will see what papa thinks," she said. "But I had intended to send for Sybilla Gaunt to spend the day here with me."

"Sybilla Gaunt!" Mrs. Wylde was beginning, remonstrance in her eye and on her lip—but Joan was already gone.

The lord was in his own sitting-room; the room next the gateway. His desk stood open on the table before him, and he looked up from his writing as Joan entered.

"Any message for either of the lads—George or Leolin?" asked he, before Joan could speak.

"Are you writing to them, papa?"

"To both of them: giving them a lecture a-piece," he added, with a half-smile.

"Do they need it then, papa?"

"Oh, boys out in the world always need that. It never comes amiss, Joan, be you very sure. I am to give your love, I suppose."

"My very dear love to both. Papa, Mrs. Wylde and her daughter are here. They wish me to go back with them for the day."

"Then go. Go by all means, Joan."

"But I do not like to leave you."

"Not like to leave me! What nonsense! Why, yesterday was the first day you were here for I can't tell how many months: what did I do, do you suppose, without you all that while? Of course you can go. I should wish you to go. Guy would wish it, I am sure. And you don't dine with us, you know, this evening."

Joan returned to the purple room to say she would go. The lord followed her, and stayed with the visitors while Joan made herself ready. As they were departing, Mrs. Wylde expressed a hope that the lord and Mr. Pomeroy would honour her table by joining it at dinner.

"I don't feel quite up to dining from home," replied the lord, shaking his head. "In a day or two, perhaps, I shall be better, and will dine with you then. As to Guy, he goes over to the town to-day, and must be back in time for our own table, for we are expecting a few gentlemen to join it."

The county town, Owlstone, some nine miles distant, was always referred to by Abbeyland as "the town." Mrs. Wylde expressed her regret that neither the lord nor Mr. Pomeroy would honour her that evening; and took her departure.

"What a lovely day it is!" cried Joan, as they stepped out from the large gates.

They began their walk through the village. Joan wore a rich black silk, and (it must be confessed) a very ugly drab bonnet; she was addicted to a sober style of dress and to grave colours. Alice had on white, blue ribbons on her dainty straw hat.

In going along they saw in the distance Guy and Rupert, who were talking with Gaunt. Guy, perhaps not seeing the ladies, started across the path that led round to the stables; walking quickly, as if he were in a hurry. Rupert came towards them. Gaunt came on also with a slower step.

"What a noble looking man he is!" exclaimed Mrs. Wylde involuntarily, alluding to Gaunt. "He would do honour to a lord's coronet."

Joan smiled. "It is said they trace their descent higher than that —to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. In those days, possibly, while a Gaunt was the knight, a Pomeroy was only his esquire."

"Then how is it that the Gaunts have so fallen?" asked Mrs. Wylde.

"We don't really know that they have so fallen; it may be they were never anything but simple gentlepeople," lightly remarked Miss Pomeroy. "None can deny, though, that they ought to be something greater and grander if looks could ensure it."

It was true that Gaunt believed himself to be descended from John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, noted in the days of the second Richard: true that he certainly did trace his pedigree very far back. He was a gentleman by descent—meaning of late palpable descent —but was very poor, his income being less than one hundred pounds yearly. He was called in the neighbourhood the "gentleman keeper," for although he was to all intents and purposes the head game-keeper to the Lord of Pomeroy, and performed conscientiously its duties, he accepted no remuneration for it. Except the cottage, which he had rent free. And though not admitted to an equality with the Pomeroys, much more than he would have been were he a regular game-keeper, he and the lord were very friendly with one another. The Lord of Pomeroy respected Gaunt and liked him; both for himself, and also for his alleged high descent: when alone, Gaunt had occasionally been bidden to lunch with him. But the sons,

Guy and Rupert, while showing themselves sufficiently friendly with Gaunt, Rupert especially, were given at times to treat him a little *de haut en bas*, forgetting perhaps that he was not a common keeper.

Gaunt's wife had also been a gentlewoman, though poorer even than himself. She died early, leaving to their only child, Sybilla, the few hundred pounds that she possessed in her own right. Sybilla had been educated at the convent, was an inmate of it for nearly ten years. She shared in all its educational advantages, though of course the same high terms could not be paid with her that were with most of the pupils—such, for example, as with the daughters of the Lord of Pomeroy. Joan patronised Sybilla, who was now three-and-twenty, and really felt a great friendship for her.

Rupert, leaving Gaunt to follow at his leisure, came up with a quick step and glowing face, shaking hands with Mrs. and Miss Wylde in his gay way. Joan walked forward to meet Gaunt. Mrs. Wylde stayed to protect her daughter from the attractive wiles of Rupert, who was already chattering nonsense to her.

The game-keeper took off his hat to Joan as a lord might do, not touching it as a game-keeper. In his heart he probably considered himself pretty equal to the Pomeroys: superior in descent, inferior in position. His manners were good, by nature he was haughty, though he rarely let that appear. Just as the Lord of Pomeroy lorded it over his servants, so did Gaunt lord it over the two keepers under him, so far as exacting strict obedience went. But he was kind and considerate to them; a good and Christian man.

"How is Sybilla?" asked Joan, when her greeting to himself was over.

"She is not well, Miss Pomeroy."

"I am sorry for that. I heard she had a bad headache—but that was yesterday."

"I cannot make her out," observed Gaunt. "She seems to have lost her health and spirits for some weeks past. Her face is quite drawn and thin."

"But what ails her?" questioned Joan.

"It is more than I can tell," replied the keeper, shaking his head. "She thinks it is the summer heat that affects her, but we have had many a summer as hot as this; and in the teeth of her saying it, she is cold, and has to wrap herself up. Her mother went off in a waste," he added, in a low, despairing kind of tone, "and I remember she was always cold, after it set in. If I lose Sybilla ——"

Gaunt stopped, overcome. All the sympathy in Joan's nature—and she had a large share of it—was aroused.

"What does Mr. Norris say? Of course you have had him to her."

"No, I have not, Miss Pomeroy. Not yet. Sybilla so strongly objects to it. She says she is quite sure she shall get better more quickly if let alone."

"I will call in and see her," said Joan. "I may spare a minute now, as we go by."

"I wish you would, Miss Joan. And perhaps you will kindly give me your opinion of her afterwards. If you think advice is necessary, I will at once call in Mr. Norris—whether Sybilla consents or not."

"I will. By the way—talking of illness," added Joan—"what do you think of my father? He seems to me to be so much altered. Do you judge him to be ill?"

"I am sure he is altered, Miss Pomeroy, but whether he is really ill is another question. People do alter greatly as they grow in years."

"I know. But papa seems to have altered suddenly."

"No; not suddenly. At least, not very suddenly. The lord has never been the same since his illness in the spring. I alluded to it a week or two ago; I mean, to the change apparent in him; but he passed the subject off with a stiff remark. He never likes to be questioned you know, Miss Joan."

Joan nodded a dismissal, seeing that Mrs. and Miss Wylde were coming on, the former having at length succeeded in getting her daughter away from the light chatter of Rupert. Gaunt bowed, turned away, and put on his hat, which he had kept off during his conversation with Joan. He raised it again in passing the other ladies; who vouchsafed him the merest nod in answer. Mrs. Wylde had never been brought to understand why Gaunt should be regarded as above any ordinary keeper.

They went on through the village, these three ladies, Miss Pomeroy momentarily stopping now and again to greet the cottagers who ran out when they saw her. She was a great favourite with all.

At the extremity of this straggling village—whose houses were mostly built in a straggling fashion instead of consecutively—they came in view of the game-keeper's lodge. Very picturesque it looked to-day, the sunshine flickering upon it through the waving trees, the many-coloured sweet flowers clustering on the grass-plat.

"How hot it is!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Wylde.

"Do you feel it so?" returned Joan. "I was going to ask you to sit down for an instant on the bench while I go in to see Sybilla Gaunt. It is beautifully shady under those trees; it will rest you."

She pointed to the bench in Gaunt's garden. It stood in the shade on the green grass, and looked inviting enough. Mrs. Wylde, however, started back as if she had been struck.

"To see Sybilla Gaunt! My dear Miss Pomeroy!"

"I will not keep you two minutes," said Joan. "I am anxious about her. Her father says she is ill."

"Miss Pomeroy!" repeated Mrs. Wylde, in a tone of strong remonstrance, "you must not go in *there;* to see *her.* You have no mother, my dear, therefore you must excuse my interposing, so far, in the light of one."

Joan Pomeroy, haughty and self-opinionated by nature and by

education, just as all the Pomeroys were, drew herself up. She had taken Mrs. Wylde's objection in a wrong light. "You do not yet know Sybilla Gaunt, I see, or you would scarcely speak of her disparagingly. She has been exceedingly well brought up; her edution has been entirely that of a gentlewoman."

"So I have heard. But no good ever comes of educating girls in her sphere of life; and thus it has proved here. My dear Miss Pomeroy, since you left, the girl has turned out to be—to be—in short, not respectable."

The two ladies stood looking at one another, Joan asking the explanation with her eyes that her lips disdained to utter. Alice traced characters on the dusty road with the end of her parasol and listened, rather amused at the dispute.

"What did you say?" demanded Joan, whose fiery Pomeroy blood was rising.

"My dear, there's no cause for you to put yourself out," said Mrs. Wylde. "It is an every-day affair with village beauties; always has been, and always will be. Sybilla Gaunt is beautiful; but she is no longer respectable, and you must drop all communication with her."

Joan Pomeroy's eyes flashed: she could be nearly as passionate as her eldest brother, when greatly provoked. "It is false, whoever says it," she declared. "How dare my father and my brothers suffer tales to go about to the prejudice of Sybilla Gaunt? They are the lords of the soil, and they ought to have put a stop to them."

Mrs. Wylde gave vent to a short, friendly laugh. "My dear, you will have to abandon your favourable prejudices," she quietly said. "Sybilla Gaunt is not respectable."

"Am I respectable?" returned the angry Joan. "You may as well say that I am not. Sybilla is my friend: she is as much a gentlewoman by descent as I am. I pray you wait for me, for I shall go in to see her."

Allowing no further opposition, Miss Pomeroy walked to the lodge door, and entered without knocking. She was in no frame of mind to heed the polite decorums of life: indeed, they obtained short favour from her at the best of times. The small, but pretty, sitting-room seemed in a litter, and Sybilla sat in it, her head bent on the table. A shawl lay on the ground: it appeared to have slipped from her shoulders.

How like she was to her father this day! Tall and stately; with the same noble features, the same unconscious, lofty air and manner. Certainly she looked a fit descendant for the proud Duke of Lancaster.

With a faint exclamation of dismay, Sybilla sprang up when she saw an intruder, and that it was Miss Pomeroy. Her pale features —not naturally so, but pale, as it appeared, from illness—grew flushed, and she picked up the shawl to throw it on again. In her haste and confusion, she defeated her own object, and the shawl

somehow alighted on her head. In stretching up her arms to right it, Joan Pomeroy gazed at her with a keen gaze; and Joan Pomeroy fell back against the inner door, and her spirit turned faint within her.

Joan did not speak; she only looked at her. Sybilla's trembling hands busied themselves in adjusting the shawl, and the transient crimson of her face faded to a death-like whiteness.

"What is this?" asked Joan, at length.

"What is—what?" returned Sybilla, a terrible trouble shining in the depth of her dark violet eyes.

"I met your father, and he told me you were ill," harshly repeated Joan. "*What* is this illness, I ask?"

"Don't frighten me, Miss Pomeroy," gasped Sybilla, who looked ready to faint.

"Answer me, I say," repeated Joan, her face as stern, at that moment, as her brother Guy's.

Sybilla choked down a gasping breath before she could answer, and when she did speak, it was in a faint, nervous tone, and in broken sentences. "The heat this summer—has been great—it has made me ill—it has overpowered me."

Joan Pomeroy heard her to an end, bending her stern, searching eyes upon her. "It is the heat that overpowers you? The heat, you say? Then why do you wear a shawl to increase it?" And Sybilla Gaunt only laid her hand upon her heart, as if to still its beating, and made no reply, for she had none to make. Miss Pomeroy stepped close up to her.

"Do you think you can deceive me? No: though you have succeeded, it would appear, in deceiving your father. You have been mad, Sybilla Gaunt; mad. You have degraded yourself——"

"Do not say too much, Miss Pomeroy," interrupted Sybilla, in a low tone. "You don't know all."

"I know and see sufficient. I know that the truth is whispered outside, and that I was warned not to subject myself to contact with you. Shame upon you! You, who were the stay of your father! you, who have boasted of a descent from the Plantagenets! you who were reared to be a gentlewoman! Sybilla Gaunt, I would as soon have believed ill of myself as of you."

Miss Pomeroy gathered up her petticoats, as if to guard them against contamination with the door-sill, and swept out. It was her one great failing—hot, hasty passion: in that, she and Guy were alike: but she had rarely been so excited as now.

Mrs. Wylde was resting on the bench, and Alice stood outside, in the road. Mrs. Wylde rose when she saw Miss Pomeroy, and hastened to get into the road also, as if the very grass-plat at Gaunt's burnt her feet.

"Come, Alice, what are you looking at? Oh, I see; Mr. Guy Pomeroy is there."

Joan turned her head. Guy was on horseback, branching off to-

wards Owlstone. Gaunt was now coming in the direction of his cottage.

"Let us get on," muttered Joan. "I do not want to see him."

"Well, my dear Miss Pomeroy, are you satisfied?" asked Mrs. Wylde.

"Quite," returned Joan, her voice taking a harsh tone in her bitter distress.

"Of course; there is no possibility of mistaking it. And her father is a—in fact, an idiot."

"Who is it that has—has brought the trouble to the house?" interrupted Joan, in the same abrupt tone, telling so surely of affliction.

"There I cannot enlighten you," replied Mrs. Wylde. "She has always, as I hear, held herself aloof from the village rustics."

"*Held herself aloof from the village rustics!*" echoed Joan Pomeroy, with angry emphasis—angry, even then, that Sybilla could be so mistaken. "I tell you, Sybilla is a gentlewoman, with—hitherto—all a gentlewoman's instincts."

Mrs. Wylde coughed. Alice broke into a sudden exclamation, perhaps to drown its mocking sound.

"How very beautiful she is!"

"Who, child?"

"Sybilla Gaunt, mamma."

"Oh," said Mrs. Wylde, scornfully. "A homely saying my old mother sometimes used is a very true one. 'Handsome is as handsome does.' Sybilla Gaunt had better have been born ugly enough to frighten the crows."

(*To be continued.*)

CAROMEL'S FARM.

YOU will be slow to believe what I am about to write, and say it savours of romance instead of reality. Every word of it is true. Here truth was stranger than fiction.

Lying midway between our house, Dyke Manor, and Church Dykely, was a substantial farm belonging to the Caromels. It stood well back from the road, a quarter of a mile or so, and was nearly hidden by the trees that surrounded it. An avenue led to the house; a rambling, spacious, very old-fashioned building, so full of queer angles inside, nooks and corners and passages, that you might lose your way in them and never find it again. The Caromels were gentlemen by descent, but their means had dwindled with years, so that they had little left besides this property. The last Caromel who died, generally distinguished as "Old Caromel" by all the parish, left two sons, Miles and Nash. The property was willed to the elder, Miles: but Nash continued to have his home with him. As to the house, it had no particular name, but was familiarly called "Caromel's Farm."

Squire Todhetley had been always intimate with them; more like a brother than anything else. Not but that he was considerably their senior. I think he liked Nash the best: he was so yielding and easy. Some said Nash was not very steady in private life, and that his brother, stern and moral, read him a lecture twice a week. But whether it was so nobody knew; people don't go prying into their neighbours' houses to seek out the holes in their coats.

At the time I am beginning to tell of, old Caromel had been dead about ten years; Nash was now five-and-thirty, Miles forty. Miles had married a lady with a good fortune, which was settled upon herself and her children; the four of them were girls, and there was no son.

At the other end of Church Dykely, ever so far past Chavasse Grange, lived a widow lady named Tinkle. And when the world had quite done wondering whether Nash Caromel meant to marry (though, indeed, what had he to marry upon?), it was suddenly found out that he wanted Mrs. Tinkle's daughter, Charlotte. The Tinkles were respectable people, but not equal to the Caromels. Mrs. Tinkle and her son farmed a little land, she had also a small private income. The son had married well: but just now he was away; having gone abroad with his wife, whose health was failing.

Charlotte Tinkle was getting towards thirty. You would not have thought it, to look at her. She had a gentle face, a gentle voice, and a young, slender figure; her light brown hair was always

neat; and she possessed one of those inoffensive natures that would like to be at peace with the whole world. It was natural that Mrs. Tinkle should wish her daughter to marry if anybody suitable presented himself—all mothers do, I suppose—but to find it was Nash Caromel took her aback.

"You think it will not do," observed the Squire, when Mrs. Tinkle was enlarging on the grievance to him one day that they met in the two-acre field.

"How can it do?" returned poor Mrs. Tinkle, in a tone between wailing and crying. "Nash Caromel has nothing to keep her on, sir, and no prospects."

"That's true," said the Pater. "At present. He has thoughts, I hear, of taking a farm."

"But he has no money to stock a farm. And look at that tale, sir, that was talked of—about that Jenny Lake. Other things have been said also."

"Oh, one must not believe all one hears. For myself, I assure you, Mrs. Tinkle, I know no harm of Nash. As to the money to stock a farm, I expect his brother could help him to it, if he chose."

"But, sir, you would surely not advise them to marry upon an uncertainty!"

"I don't advise them to marry at all; understand that, my good lady; I think it would be the height of imprudence. But I can't prevent it."

"Mr. Todhetley," she answered, a tear dropping down her thin cheeks, on which there was a chronic redness, "I am unable to describe to you how much my mind is set against the match: I seem to foresee that no good would ever come of it; nothing but misery for Charlotte. And she has had so peaceful a home all her life."

"Tell Charlotte she can't have him—if you think so strongly about it."

"She won't listen—at least to any purpose," groaned Mrs. Tinkle. "When I talk to her, she says, 'Yes, dear mother; no, dear mother,' in her dutiful way: and the same evening she'll be listening to Nash Caromel's courting words. Her Uncle Tinkle rode over from Inkberrow to talk to her, for I wrote to him: but it seems to have made no impression on her in the long run. What I am afraid of is, that Nash Caromel will marry her in spite of us."

"I should like to see my children marry in spite of me!" cried the Squire, giving way to one of his heats. "I'd 'marry' them. Nash can't take her against her will, my dear friend: it takes two people, you know, to complete a bargain of that sort. Promise Charlotte to shake her unless she listens to reason. Why should she not listen? She is meek and tractable."

"She always has been. But, once let a girl be enthralled by a sweetheart, there's no answering for her. Duty to parents is often forgotten then."

"If——Why, mercy upon us, there *is* Charlotte!" broke off the Pater, happening to lift his eyes to the stile. "And Nash too."

Yes, there they were: standing on the other side the stile in the cross-way path, having met accidentally. "Halloa!" called out the Squire.

"I can't stay a moment," said Nash Caromel, turning his good-looking face to speak: and it cannot be denied it was a good-looking face, or that he was an attractive man. "Miles has sent me to that cattle sale up yonder, and I am full late."

With a smile and a nod, he stepped lightly onwards, his slender, supple figure, of middle height, upright as a dart; his fair hair waving in the breeze. Charlotte Tinkle glanced shyly after him, her cheeks blushing like a peony.

"What's this I hear, young lady?—that you and Mr. Nash yonder want to make a match of it, in spite of pastors and masters!" began the Squire. "Is it true?"

Charlotte stood like a goose, making marks on the dusty path with the end of her large grass-green parasol. Parasols were made for use then, not show.

"Nash has nothing, you know," went on the Pater. "No money, no land, no house, no anything. There'd not be common sense in it, Charlotte."

"I tell him so, sir," answered Charlotte, lifting her shy brown eyes for a moment.

"To be sure; that's right. Here's your mother fretting herself into fiddlestrings for fear of—of—I hardly know what."

"Lest you should be tempted to forget your duty to me, Lottie," struck in the mother. "Ah, my dear! you young people little think what trouble and anxiety you bring upon us."

Charlotte Tinkle suddenly burst into tears, to the surprise of her beholders. Drying them up as soon as she could, she spoke with a sigh.

"I hope I shall never bring trouble upon you, mother, never; I'd not do it willingly for the world. But ——"

"But what, child?" cried the mother, for Charlotte had come to a standstill.

"I—I am afraid that parents and children see with different eyes—just as though things wore for each a totally opposite aspect. The difficulty is, how to reconcile that view and this."

"And do you know what my father used to say to me in my young days?" put in the Squire. "'Young folks think old folks fools, but old folks know the young ones to be so.' There was never a truer saying than that, Miss Charlotte."

Miss Charlotte only sighed in answer. The wind, high that day, was taking her muslin petticoats, and she had some ado to keep them down. Mrs. Tinkle got over the stile, and the Squire turned back towards home.

A fortnight or so had gone by when Church Dykely awoke one morning to an electric shock: Nash Caromel and Charlotte had gone and got married. They did it without the consent of (as the Squire had put it) pastors and masters. Nash had none to consult, for he could not be expected to yield obedience to his brother; and Charlotte had asked Mrs. Tinkle, and Mrs. Tinkle had refused to countenance the ceremony, though she did not actually walk into the church to forbid it.

Taking a three weeks' trip by way of honeymoon, the bride and bridegroom came back to Church Dykely. Caromel's Farm refused to take them in; and Miles Caromel, indignant to a degree, told his brother that "as he had made his bed, so must he lie upon it," which is a very convenient reproach, and often used.

"Nash is worse than a child," grumbled Miles to the Squire, his tones harder than usual, and his manner colder. "He has gone and married this young woman—who is not his equal—and now he has no home to give her. Did he suppose that we should receive him back here?—and her as well? He has acted like an idiot."

"Mrs. Tinkle will not have anything to do with them," returned the Pater: "and Tinkle, of Inkberrow, is furious."

"Tinkle of Inkberrow's no fool. Being a man of substance, he thinks they may be falling back upon him."

Which was the precise fear that lay upon Miles himself. Meanwhile Nash engaged sumptuous lodgings (if such a word could be justly applied to any rooms at Church Dykely), and drove his wife out daily in the pony gig that was always looked upon as his at Caromel's Farm.

Nash was flush of money now, for he had saved some; but he could not go on living upon it for ever. After sundry interviews with his brother, Miles agreed to hand him over a thousand pounds: not at all too large a sum, considering that Nash had given him his services, such as they were, for a number of years for just his keep as a gentleman and a bonus for pocket money. A thousand pounds would not go far with such a farm as Nash had been used to and would like to take, and he resolved to emigrate to America.

Mrs. Tinkle (the Squire called her simple at times) was nearly wild when she heard of it. It brought her out of her temper with a leap. Condoning the rebellious marriage, she went off to remonstrate with Nash.

"But now, why need you put yourself into this unhappy state?" asked Nash, when he had heard what she had to say. "Dear Mrs. Tinkle, do admit some common sense into your mind. I am not taking Charlotte to the 'other end of the world,' as you put it, but to America. It is only a few days' passage. Outlandish foreigners! Not a bit of it. The people there are, so to speak, our own countrymen. Their language is ours; their laws are, I believe, much as ours are."

"You may as well be millions of miles away, practically speaking," bewailed Mrs. Tinkle. "Charlotte will be as much lost to me there as she would be at the North Pole. She is my only daughter, Nash Caromel, and has never been away from me: to part with her will be like parting with life."

"I am very sorry," said poor Nash, who was like a woman when any appeal was made to his feelings. "Live with you? No, that would not do: but, thank you all the same for offering it. Nothing would induce me to spunge upon you in that way: and were I capable of it, your son Henry would speedily turn us out when he returned. I must get a home of my own, for Charlotte's sake as well as for mine: and I know I can do that in America. Land, there, may be had for an old song; fortunes are made in no time. The probability is that before half-a-dozen years have gone over our heads, I shall bring you Charlotte home a rich woman, and we shall settle down here for life."

There's no space to pursue the arguments—which lasted for a week or two. But they brought forth no result. Nash might have turned a post sooner than the opinions of Mrs. Tinkle, and she might as well have tried to turn the sun as to stop his emigrating. The parish looked upon it as not at all a bad scheme. Nash might get on well over there if he would put off his besetting sin, easy indolence, and not allow the Yankees to take him in.

So Nash Caromel and Charlotte his wife set sail for New York; Mrs. Tinkle bitterly resenting the step, and wholly refusing to be reconciled.

II.

About five years went by. Henry Tinkle's wife had died, leaving him a little girl, and he was back with the child at his mother's: but that has nothing to do with us. A letter came from the travellers now and then, but not often, during the first three years. Nash wrote to Caromel's Farm; Charlotte to the parson's wife, Mrs. Holland, with whom she had been very friendly. But none of the letters gave much information as to personal matters; they were chiefly filled with descriptions of the new country, its modes and customs, and especially its mosquitoes, which at first nearly drove Mrs. Nash Caromel mad. It was gathered that Nash *did not prosper*. They seemed to move about much from place to place, making New York a kind of standing point, to return to occasionally. For the past two years no letters at all had come, and it was questioned whether poor Nash and his wife had not dropped out of the world.

In the midst of this uncertainty, Miles Caromel, who had been seriously ailing for some months, died. And to Nash, if he were still in existence, lapsed the Caromel property.

Old Mr. Caromel's will had been a curious one. He bequeathed Caromel Farm, with all its belongings, the live-stock, the standing ricks, the crops, the furniture, and all else that might be in or upon it, to his son Miles, and to Miles's eldest son after him. If Miles left no son, then it was to go to Nash (with all that might then be upon it, just as before), and so on to Nash's son. But if neither of them had a son, and Nash died during Miles's lifetime—in short, if there was no male inheritor living, then Miles could dispose of the property as he pleased. As could Nash under similar circumstances.

The result of this odd will was, that Nash, if alive, came into the farm and to all that was upon it. If Nash had, or should have, a son, it must descend to that son; if he had not, the property was his absolutely. But it was not known whether Nash was alive; and in the uncertainty Miles made a will conditionally, bequeathing it to his wife and daughters. It was said that the possessing no son had long been a standing thorn in the shoes of Miles Caromel; that he had prayed for one, summer and winter.

But now, who was to find Nash? How could the executors let him know of his good luck? The Squire, who was one of them, talked of nothing else. A letter was despatched to Nash's agents in New York, Abraham B. Whitter and Co., and no more could be done.

In a shorter time than you would have supposed possible, Nash arrived. He chanced to be at these same agents' house when the letter got there, and came off at full speed. So the will made by Miles went for nothing. Nash was a good bit altered—looked thinner and older: but he was evidently just as easy and persuadable as he used to be: people often wondered whether Nash had ever said No in his whole life. He did not tell us much about himself, only that he had roamed over the world, hither and thither, from country to country, and had been lately for some time in California. Charlotte was at San Francisco. When Nash took ship from thence for New York, she was not well enough to undertake the voyage, and had to stay behind. Mrs. Tinkle, who had had time, and to spare, to get over her anger, went into a fine way at this last item of news; and she caught up the notion that Charlotte was dead. For which she had no grounds.

Charlotte had no children; had not had any; consequently, there was every probability that Caromel's Farm would be Nash's absolutely, to will away as he should please. He found Mrs. Caromel (his brother's widow) and her daughters in it: they had not bestirred themselves to look out for another residence. Being very well off, Mrs. Caromel having had several substantial windfalls in the shape of legacies from rich uncles and aunts, they professed to be glad that Nash should have the property—whatever they might have privately felt. Nash, out of a good-natured wish not to disturb them too soon, bade them choose their own time for moving, and took up his abode

Nave, the lawyer's.

There are lawyers and lawyers. I am a great deal older now than I was when these events were enacted, and have gained my share of worldly wisdom; and I, Johnny Ludlow, say that there are good and honest lawyers in the world as well as bad and dishonest. My experience has lain more amidst the former class than the latter. Though I have, to my cost, been brought into contact with one or two bad ones in my time; fearful rogues.

One of these was Andrew Nave, recently of Church Dykely. His name might have had a "K" prefixed, and been all the better for it. Of fair show outside, indeed rather a good-looking man, he was not fair within. He managed to hold his own in the parish estimation, as a rule: it was only when some crafty deed or other struggled to the surface that people would say, "What a sharper that man is!"

The family lawyer of the Caromels, Crow, of Evesham, chanced to be ill at this time, and away for change of air, and Nave rushed up to greet Nash on his return, and to offer his services. And the fellow was so warm and hearty, so fair-speaking, so much the gentleman, that easy Nash, who knew nothing of the man, bad or good, clasped the hand held out to him, and promised Knave his patronage forthwith. If I've made a mistake in spelling the name, it can go.

To begin with, Nave took him home. He lived a door or two past Dufthams: a nice house, well kept up in paint. Some five years before, the sleepy old lawyer, Wilkinson, died in that house, and Nave came down from London and took to the concern. Nave thought that he was doing a first-rate stroke of business by securing Nash Caromel as an inmate, the solicitorship to the Caromel property being worth trying for; though he might not have been so eager to admit Nash had he foreseen all that was to come of it.

Not caring to trouble Mrs. Caromel with his company, Nash accepted Nave's hospitality; but, liking to be independent, he insisted upon paying for it, and mentioned a handsome weekly sum. Nave made a show of resistance—which was all put on, for he was as fond of shillings as he was of pounds—and then gave in. So Nash, feeling free, stayed on at his ease.

When Nave had first come to settle at Church Dykely with his daughter Charlotte, he was taken for a widower. It turned out, however, that there was a Mrs. Nave living somewhere with the rest of the children, she and her husband having agreed to what was called an amicable separation, for their tempers did not agree. This eldest daughter, Charlotte, a gay, dashing girl of two-and-twenty then, was the only creature in the world, it was said, for whom Nave cared.

Mrs. Caromel did not appear to find readily a place to her liking. People are particular when about to purchase a residence. She made repeated apologies to Nash for keeping him out of his home, but he assured her that he was in no hurry to leave his present quarters.

And that was true. For Charlotte Nave was casting her glamour over him. She liked to cast that over men; and tales had gone about respecting her. Nothing very tangible: and perhaps they would not have held water. She was a little, fair, dashing woman, swaying about her flounces as she walked, with a great heap of beautiful hair, bright as gold. Her blue eyes had a way of looking into yours rather too freely, and her voice was soft as a summer's wind. A dangerous companion.

Well, they fell in love with one another, as was said; she and Nash. Nash forgot his wife, and she her old lovers. Being now on the road to her twenty-eighth year, she had had her share of them. Once she had been absent for two weeks, and Church Dykely somehow got up the idea that she and one of her lovers (a young gentleman who was reading law with Nave) were taking a fraternal tour together as far as London to see the lions. But it turned out to be a mistake, and nobody laughed at the notion more than Charlotte. She wished she had been on a tour—and seeing lions, she said, instead of moping away the whole two weeks at her aunt's, who had a perpetual asthma, and lived in a damp old house at Chelsea.

The weeks went on. Autumn weather came in. Mrs. Caromel found a place to suit her at Kempsey—one of the prettiest of the villages that lie under the wing of Worcester. She bought it; and removed to it with her private goods and chattels. Nash, even now, made no haste to quit the lawyer's house for his own. Some said it was he who could not tear himself away from Charlotte; others said Miss Charlotte would not let him go; that she held him fast by a silken cord. Anyhow, they were always together, out of doors and in; she seemed to like to parade their friendship before the world, as some girls like to lead about a pet monkey. Perhaps Nash first took to her from her name being the same as his wife's.

One day Nash walked over to the Manor and had a long talk in private with the Squire. He wanted to borrow twelve hundred pounds. No ready money had come to him from his brother, and it was not a favourable time for selling produce. The Squire cheerfully agreed to lend it him: there was no risk.

"But I'd counsel you to remember one thing, Nash Caromel—that you have a wife," said he, as they came out of the room when Nash was going away. "It's time you left off dallying with that other young woman."

Nash laughed a laugh that had an uneasy sound in it. "It is nothing, Todhetley."

"Glad to hear you say so," said the Pater. "She has the reputation of being a dangerous flirt. *You* are not the first man she has entangled, if all tales be true. Get out of Nave's house and into your own."

"I will," acquiesced Nash.

Perhaps that was easier said than done. It happened that the

same evening I overheard a few words pass between the lawyer and Nash. They were not obliged to apply to Miss Nave: but, the chances were that they did.

The Squire sent me to Nave's, when dinner was over, to take a note to Nash. Nave's smart waiting-maid, in a muslin apron and cherry cap-strings, was standing at the door talking and laughing with some young man, under cover of the twilight. She was as fond of finery as her mistress; perhaps as fond of sweethearts.

"Mr. Caromel? Yes, sir, he is at home. Please to walk in."

Showing me to a sitting-room on the left-hand side of the passage —the lawyer's offices were on the right—she shut me in, and went, as I supposed, to tell Caromel. At the back of this room was the dining-room. I heard the rattle of glasses on the table through the unlatched folding doors, and next the rattle of voices. The lawyer and Nash were sitting over their wine.

"You must marry her," said Nave, concisely.

"I wish I could," returned Nash; and his wavering, irresolute tone was just a contrast to the other's keen one. "I want to. But how can I? I'm heartily sorry."

"And as soon as may be. *You must.* Attentions paid to young ladies cannot be allowed to end in smoke. And you will find her thousand pounds useful."

"But how *can* I, I say?" cried Nash ruefully. "You know how impracticable it is—the impediment that exists."

"Stuff and nonsense, Caromel! Where there's a will there's a way. Impediments only exist to be got over."

"It would take a cunning man to get over the one that lies between me and her. I assure you, and you may know I say it in all good faith, that I should ask nothing better than to be a free man to-morrow—for this one sole cause."

"Leave things to me. For all you know, you are free now."

The opening of their door by the maid, who had taken her own time to do it, and the announcement that I waited to see Mr. Caromel, stopped the rest. Nash came in, and I gave him the note.

"Wants to see me before twelve to-morrow, does he?—something he forgot to say," cried he, running his eyes over it. "Tell the Squire I will be there, Johnny."

Caromel was very busy after that, getting into his house—for he took the Squire's advice, and did not linger much longer at Nave's. And I think two or three weeks only had passed, after he was in it, when news reached him of his wife's death.

It came from his agent in New York, Abraham B. Whitter, who had received the information from San Francisco. Mr. Whitter enclosed the San Francisco letters; one written to himself, the other (which was as yet not unsealed) to Nash Caromel.

We read them both: Nash brought them to the Squire before sending them to Mrs. Tinkle—considerate as ever, he would not let

her see them until she had been prepared. The letters did not say much. Mrs. Nash Caromel had grown weaker and weaker after Nash departed from San Francisco for New York, and finally sunk under low fever. A diary which she had kept the last few weeks of her life, meant only for his own eye, together with a few letters and sundry other personal trifles, would be forwarded the first opportunity to Abraham B. Whitter and Co., who would hold the box at Mr. Caromel's disposal.

"Who is he, this Francis Munn that writes to you?" asked the Squire. "A friend of your wife's?—she appears to have died at his house."

"A true friend of hers and of mine," answered Nash. "It was with Mr. and Mrs. Munn that I left Charlotte, when I was obliged to go to New York. She was not well enough to travel with me."

"Well—look here, Caromel—don't go and marry that other Charlotte," advised the Squire. "She is as different from your wife as chalk is from cheese. Poor thing! it was a hard fate—dying over there away from everybody!"

But now—would anybody believe it?—instead of taking the Squire's advice and not marrying her at all, instead even of allowing a decent time to elapse, in less than a week Nash went to church with Charlotte the Second. Shame, said Parson Holland under his breath; shame, said the parish aloud: but Nash Caromel heeded them not.

We only knew it was to be, the day before the wedding. On Wednesday morning, a fine, crisp, October day, a shooting party was to meet at old Appleton's, who lived over beyond Church Dykely. The Squire and Tod started for it after an early breakfast, and they let me go part of the way with them. Just after passing Caromel's Farm, we met Pettipher the postman.

"Anything for the Manor?" asked the Pater.

"Yes, sir," answered the man; and, diving into his bundle, he handed a letter.

"This is not mine," said the Squire, looking at the address; "this is for Mr. Caromel."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, sir; I took out the wrong letter. This is yours."

"What a thin letter!—come from foreign parts," remarked the Pater, reading the address, "Nash Caromel, Esq." "I seem to know the handwriting: fancy I've seen it before. Here, take it, Pettipher."

In passing the letter to Pettipher, I looked at the said writing. Very small, poor writing indeed, with long angular tails to the letters up and down, especially the capitals. The Squire handed me his gun and was turning to walk on, opening his letter as he did so; when Pettipher spoke and arrested him.

"Have you heard what's coming off yonder, to-morrow, sir?" asked he, pointing with his thumb to Caromel's Farm.

"Why no," said the Squire, wondering what Pettipher meant to be at. "What should be coming off?"

"Mr. Caromel's going to bring a wife home. Leastways, going to get married."

"I don't believe it," burst forth the Pater, after staring angrily at the man. "You'd better take care what you say, Pettipher."

"But it's true, sir," reasoned Pettipher, "though it's not generally known. My niece is apprentice to Mrs. King the dressmaker, as perhaps you know, sir, and they are making Miss Nave's wedding-dress and bonnet. They are to be married quite early, sir, nine o'clock, before folks are about. Well yes, sir, it is not seemly, seeing he has but now heard of his wife's death, poor Miss Charlotte Tinkle, that grew up among us—but you'll find it's true."

Whether the Squire gave more hot words to Nash Caromel, or to Charlotte the Second, or to Pettipher for telling it, I can't say now. Pettipher touched his hat, said good morning, and turned up the avenue to Caromel's Farm, to leave the letter for Nash.

And, married they were on the following morning, amidst a score or two of spectators. What was agate had slipped out to others as well as ourselves. Old Clerk Bumford looked more angry than a raven when he saw us flocking into the church, after Nash had fee'd him to keep it quiet.

As the clock struck nine, the party came. The bride and one of her sisters, both in white silk; Nave and some strange gentleman, who might be a friend of his; and Caromel, paler than a ghost. Charlotte the Second was pale too, but uncommonly pretty, her mass of beautiful hair shining like silken threads of gold.

The ceremony over, they filed out into the porch; Nash leading his bride, and Nave bringing up the rear alone; when an anxious-looking little woman with a chronic redness of face was seen coming across the churchyard. It was Mrs. Tinkle, wearing the deep mourning she had put on for Charlotte. Somebody had carried her the tidings, and she had come running forth to see whether they *could* be true.

And, to watch her, poor thing, with her scared face raised to Nash, and her poor hands clasped in pain, as he and his bride passed her on the pathway, was something sad. Nash Caromel's face had grown white again; but he never looked at her, or turned his eyes, fixed straight out before him, a hair's point to the right or left.

"May heaven have mercy upon them—for surely they'll need it!" cried the poor woman. "No luck can come of such a wedding as this."

III.

The months went on. Mrs. Nash was ruling the roast at Caromel's Farm, being unquestionably both mistress and master. Nash Caromel's old easy indolence had grown now to apathy. It almost seemed as

though the farm might go as it liked for him ; but his wife was energetic, and she kept servants of all kinds to their work.

Nash excused himself for his hasty wedding when people reproached him—and a few had done that on his return from the honeymoon. His first wife had been dead for some months, he said, and the farm wanted a mistress. She had only been dead to him a week, was the answer he got to this : and, as to the farm, he was quite as competent to manage that himself without a mistress as with one. After all, where was the use of bothering about it when the thing was done ?—and the offence concerned himself, not his neighbours. So the matter was condoned at length ; Nash was taken into favour again, and the past dropped.

But Nash, as I have told you, grew apathetical. His spirits were low ; the Squire remarked one day that he was like a man who had some inward care upon him. Mrs. Nash, on the contrary, was cheerful as a summer's day ; she filled the farm with visitors, and made the money fly.

All too soon, a baby arrived. It was in May, and he must have travelled at railroad speed. Nurse Picher, called in hastily on the occasion, could not find anything the matter with him. A beautiful boy, she said, as like his father, Master Nash (she had known Nash as a boy), as one pea was like another. Mrs. Nash told a tale of having been run after by a cow ; Duffham, when attacked by the parish on the point, shut his lips, and would say never a word, good or bad. Anyway, here he was ; a fine little boy and the son-and-heir : and if he had mistaken the proper time to appear, why clearly it must be his own fault or the cow's : other people were not to be blamed for it. Mrs. Nash Caromel, frantic with delight at its being a boy, sent an order to old Bumford to set the bells a ringing.

But now, it was a singular thing that the Squire should chance to be present at the delivery of another of those letters that bore the handwriting with the angular tails. Not but that very singular coincidences do take place in this life, and I often think it would not hurt us if we paid more heed to them. Caromel's Farm was getting rather behindhand with its payments. Whether through its master's apathy, or its mistress's extravagance, ready money grew inconveniently short, and the Squire could not get his interest paid on the twelve hundred pounds.

"I'll go over and jog his memory," said he one morning, as we got up from breakfast. "Put on your cap, Johnny."

There was a pathway to Caromel's across the fields, and that was the way we took. It was a hot, lovely day, early in July. Some wheat on the Caromel land was already down.

"Splendid weather it has been for the corn," cried the Squire, turning himself about, "and we shall have a splendid harvest. Somehow I always fancy the crops ripen on this land sooner than on any other about here, Johnny."

"So they do, sir."

"Fine rich land it is: shouldn't grumble if it were mine. We'll go in at this gate, lad."

"This gate" was the side gate. It opened on a path that led direct to the sitting-room with glass doors. Nash was standing just inside the room, and of all the uncomfortable expressions that can sit on a man's face, the worst sat on his. The Squire noticed it, and spoke in a whisper.

"Johnny lad, he looks just as though he had seen a ghost."

It's just what he did look like—a ghost that frightened him. We were close up before he noticed us. Giving a great start, he smoothed his face, smiled, and held out his hand.

"You don't look well," said the Squire, as he sat down. "What's amiss?"

"Nothing at all," answered Nash. "The heat bothers me, as usual: can't sleep at nights for it. Why, here's the postman! What makes him so late, I wonder?"

Pettipher was coming straight down to the window, the letters in his hand. Something in his free, onward step seemed to tell that he must be in the habit of delivering the letters to Nash at that same window.

"Two, sir, this morning," said Pettipher, handing them in.

As Nash was taking the letters, one of them fell, either by his own awkwardness or by Pettipher's. I picked it up and gave it to him, address upwards. The Squire saw it.

"Why, that's the same handwriting that puzzled me," cried he, speaking on the impulse of the moment. "It seemed familiar to me, but I could not remember where I had seen it. It's a foreign letter."

Nash laughed—a lame kind of laugh—and put both letters into his pocket. "It comes from a chum of mine that I picked up over yonder," said he to the Squire, nodding his head towards where the sea might be supposed to lie. "I don't think you could ever have been familiar with it."

They went away to talk of business, leaving me alone. Mrs. Nash Caromel came in with her baby. She wore a white dress and light green ribbons, a lace cap half shading her bright hair. Uncommonly pretty she looked—but I did not like her.

"Is it you, Johnny Ludlow?" said she, pausing a moment at the door, and then holding out her hand. "I thought my husband was here alone."

"He is gone into the library with the Squire."

"Sit down. Have you seen my baby before? Is he not a beauty?"

It was a nice little fellow, with fat arms and blue knitted shoes, a good deal like Nash. They had named him Duncan, after some relative of hers, and the result was that he was never called anything but "Dun." Mrs. Caromel was telling me that she had

"short-coated" him early, as it was hot weather, when the others appeared, and the Squire marched me off.

"Johnny," said he, thoughtfully, as we went along, "how curiously Nash Caromel is altered!"

"He seems rather—*down*, sir," I answered, hesitating for a word.

"Down!" echoed the Squire, slightingly; "it's more than that. He seems lost."

"Lost, sir?"

"His mind does. When I told him what I had come about—that it was time, and long ago, too, that my interest was paid, he stared at me more like a lunatic than a farmer—as if he had forgotten all about it, interest, and money, and all. When his wits came to him, he said it ought to have been paid, and he'd see Nave about it. Nave's his father-in-law, Johnny, and I suppose will take care of his interests; but I know I'd as soon entrust my affairs to Old Scratch as to him."

The Squire got his interest paid. The next news we heard was that Caromel's Farm was about to give an entertainment on a grand scale: an afternoon fête out of doors, with a sumptuous cold collation that you might call by what name you liked—dinner, tea, or supper—in the evening. An invitation printed on a square card came to us, which we all crowded round the Mater to look at—cards had not come much into fashion then, except for public ceremonies, such as the Mayor's Feast at Worcester. In our part of the world we were still content to write our invitations on note-paper.

The Mater would not go. She did not care for fêtes, she said to us. In point of fact she did not like Mrs. Nash Caromel any better than she had liked Charlotte Nave, and she had never believed in the cow. So she sent a civil note of excuse for herself. The Squire accepted, after some hesitation. He and the Caromels had been friends for so many years that he did not care to put the slight of a refusal upon Nash; besides, he liked parties if they were jolly.

But now, would any rational being believe that Madam Nash had the cheek to send an invitation to Mrs. Tinkle and her son Henry? It was what Harry Tinkle called it—cheek. When poor Mrs. Tinkle broke the red seal of the huge envelope, and read the card of invitation, from Mr. and Mrs. Caromel, her eyes were dim.

"I think they must have sent it as a cruel joke," remarked Mrs. Tinkle, meeting the Squire a day or two before the fête. "She has never spoken to me in her life. When we pass each other she picks up her skirts as if they were too good to touch mine. Once she laughed at me rudely."

"Don't believe she knows any better," cried the Squire in his hot partisanship. "Her skirts were not fit to touch your own Charlotte's."

"Oh, Charlotte! poor Charlotte!" cried Mrs. Tinkle, losing her balance of equanimity. "I wish I could hear the particulars of her last moments," she went on, brushing away the tears. "If

Mr. Caromel has had details—and that letter, telling of her death, promised them, you know—he does not disclose them to me."

"Why don't you write a note and ask him, Mrs. Tinkle?"

"I hardly know why," she answered. "I think he cannot have heard, or he would surely tell me; he is not bad hearted."

"No, only too easy; swayed by anybody that may be at his elbow for the time being," concluded the Squire. "Nash Caromel is one of those people who need to be kept in leading-strings all their lives. Good morning."

It was a fête worth going to. The afternoon as sunshiny a one as ever August turned out, and the company gay, if not numerous. Only a sprinkling of ladies could be seen: but amongst them was Miles Caromel's widow, with her four daughters. Being women of consideration, deserving the respect of the world, they went for much, and Mrs. Nash had cause to thank them. They showed countenance to her for the sake of the honour of the Caromels.

Archery, dancing, promenading, and talking took up the afternoon, and then came the banquet. Altogether it must have cost Caromel's Farm a tidy sum.

"It is well for you to be able to afford this," cried the Squire confidentially to Nash, as they stood together in one of the shady paths beyond the light of the coloured lanterns, when the evening was drawing to an end. "Miles would never have done it."

"Oh, I don't know—it's no harm once in a way," answered Nash, who had exerted himself wonderfully, and finished up by drinking his share of wine. "Miles had his ways, and I have mine."

"All right: it is your own affair. But I'd not have done one thing, my good friend—sent an invitation to your mother-in-law."

"What mother-in-law?" asked Nash, staring.

"Your ex-mother-in-law, I ought to have said—Mrs. Tinkle. I'd not have done it, Caromel, under the circumstances. It pained her."

"But who did send her an invitation? Is it likely? I don't know what you are talking of, Squire."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" returned the Squire, perceiving that the act was Madam's and not his. "Have you ever had those particulars of Charlotte's death?"

Nash Caromel's face changed from red to a deadly pallor: the question unnerved him—took his wits out of him.

"The particulars of Charlotte's death?" he stammered, looking all abroad. "What particulars?"

"Why, those promised you by the man who wrote—Munn, was his name? Charlotte's diary, and letters, and things, that he was sending off to New York."

"Oh—ay—I remember," answered Nash, pulling his senses together. "No, they have not come."

"Been lost on the way, do you suppose? What a pity!"

"They may have been. I have not had them."

Nash Caromel walked straight away with the last words. Either to get rid of the subject, or to join some people who just then crossed the top of the path.

"Caromel does not like talking of her: I can see that, Johnny," remarked the Squire to me later. "I don't believe he'd have done as he did, but for this second Charlotte throwing her wiles across his path. He fell into the snare and his conscience pricks him."

"I daresay, sir, it will come right with time. She is very pretty."

"Yes, most crooked things come straight with time," assented the Squire. "Perhaps this one will."

Would it, though!

The weeks and the months went on. Caromel's Farm seemed to prosper, its mistress being a most active manager, ruling with an apparently soft will, but one firm as iron; and little Dun grew to be about fifteen months old. The cow might have behaved ungenteelly to him, as Miss Bailey's ghost says to Captain Smith, but it had not hurt the little fellow, or his stout legs either, which began now to be running him into all kinds of mischief. And so the time came round again to August—just a year after the fête, and nearly two years after Nash's second marriage.

One evening, Tod being out and Mrs. Todhetley in the nursery, I was alone with the Squire in the twilight. The great harvest moon was rising behind the trees; and the Squire, talking of some parish grievance that he had heard of from old Jones the constable, let it rise: while I was wishing he would call for lights that I might get on with "The Old English Baron," which I was reading for about the seventeenth time.

"And you see, Johnny, if Jones had been firm, as I told him this afternoon, and taken the fellow up, instead of letting him slope off and be lost, the poachers —— Who's this coming in, lad?"

The Squire had caught sight of some one turning to the door from the covered path. I saw the fag end of a petticoat.

"I think it must be Mrs. Scott, sir. The mother said she had promised to come over one of these first evenings."

"Ay," said the Squire. "Open the door for her, Johnny."

I had the front door open in a twinkling, and saw a lady with a travelling cloak on her arm. But she bore no resemblance to Mrs. Scott.

"Is Mr. Todhetley at home?"

The soft voice gave me a thrill, and a shock, though years had elapsed since I heard it. A confused doubt came rushing over me; a perplexing question well-nigh passed my lips: "Is it a living woman or a dead one?" For there stood Nash Caromel's dead wife, Charlotte the First.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ISLANDS.

By CHARLES W. WOOD, Author of "Through Holland."

ONE day last spring I received a letter from a friend, asking me to visit him in the Orkney Islands. I had formed other wishes and plans, but one after the other had to be set aside. Time went on; summer was passing; I felt more than the universal want of mere change of air—it must be especially bracing. Thus, for many good reasons, I decided to go up to Orkney and Shetland.

But at this point I found myself in the horns of a dilemma—how to get there. In the great Metropolis of London there existed not one office to furnish the information. As the last resource I went down to the celebrated Cook's establishment. They could tell me how to go round the world; how to get through Egypt; point out the very source of the Nile; but they could not tell me how to get to Orkney. No wonder that I at once gave up further search, and telegraphed to Aberdeen. I knew that the Orkney steamer left Granton twice a week, calling at this "Granite City." The days proved to be Tuesdays and Fridays.

There are various ways of reaching Orkney. You may go altogether by sea, from London to Aberdeen, and thence to Orkney: or half way by land and half by sea, starting from Granton: or almost altogether by land; crossing over from Thurso, in the extreme north of Scotland, to Stromness in Orkney. This boat carries the mails. The passage along the Pentland Firth occupies from one to two hours, and is often frightfully rough. This route is the most fatiguing and expensive of the three indicated, but the best because the shortest for those who suffer much at sea. The long passage in calm weather and a not overcrowded boat ought to be very pleasant. Before it really becomes so, the company of each line must organize a few very necessary reforms.

For the sake of quiet, rest, and sea air, I chose the long route to Orkney. The first stage was from London to Aberdeen. I left the Temple pier at two o'clock on the 1st of August, 1877. A tug was in waiting to convey all passengers down the river to the Aberdeen boat who did not care for the long drive to Wapping. The tug was crowded, greatly to the peril of the rest and quiet I had been hugging to my bosom for some days past in fond delusion. At last the boat started, and presently came up to the Aberdeen steamer. The boats on this service, it is well known, are fine and good. For a short passage of two nights and a day nothing better need be desired. My first care was to seek out the steward and secure a berth.

"Very sorry, sir," replied that important personage, "but I

haven't one to give you. Every berth in the ship was taken three weeks ago."

This was such plain speaking that remonstrance was evidently useless. At least, he would give me a shakedown on the floor of the large cabin. Even here I was nonplussed. Not a mattress or pillow in the ship but had been bespoken twice over. This was too much for human nature.

"What is to be done?" I asked. "Do you expect me to remain for two nights on deck and get neither sleep nor rest?"

"Very sorry, sir," repeated the steward. "I often wish I could expand the ship. But you are welcome to a seat on a form, and the table for a pillow."

"That will never do," I answered. "When the time comes, somehow or other you must find me a shakedown on the ground."

And somehow or other, when the time came, he found what was required. It proved, too, far more comfortable and airy than a berth in a small, confined cabin, made to accommodate four persons.

Soon after three o'clock the good ship steamed away from "Wapping Old Stairs," and the journey began. We had not started many minutes before a lady, charming no doubt, but simple, went up to the wheel-box—the long mahogany cover stretching from wheel to stern—and surveying it with perplexed amazement, at length exclaimed, to the no small amusement of her hearers:

"A curious thing! A *very* curious thing! Is it a piano?"

Out on the broad sea: a great part of the time too far from the coast to distinguish it. The most interesting and picturesque point was Flamborough Head, which stood out bold, grand, and beautiful, with its fine cliffs and green sunny surface. By five o'clock on Friday morning we entered the difficult and dangerous harbour of Aberdeen. The sight was magnificent when I first went on deck. The sun had risen; clouds and sword-like streaks of flaming colour were scattered about the sky in amazing splendour; the air was keen and clear. Most of the passengers on deck looked wild and dissipated—the result of two uncomfortable nights on board. A young traveller, with whom I had chummed during the voyage, had had his rug appropriated by a lady whose ideas seemed to be hazy on the distinction between the rights of meum and tuum: and he was wondering how he could claim his own without shocking her delicate sensitiveness. The town before us looked cold and uninviting, with its houses of dull-grey stone. Before six o'clock all had landed. There had been nothing to complain of but the supplies. These were very bad, and more than one passenger gave up all attempt at sitting down to meals. A very unwise economy on the part of the Company.

I had the whole day before me. The Orkney steamer would not start before six in the evening. There is much that is worth seeing in Aberdeen and its neighbourhood: in the old and the new town; the old being, naturally, more quaint and curious than the new.

Especially worth visiting is King's College, with its fine new library, and its ancient chapel fitted up with magnificent carving black with age. Near it is the quaint cathedral, which dates back to the 14th century, but has been restored from time to time. Not far from here is the lovely spot where the river Don flows to the sea, in a deep vale or ravine. In the distance is the picturesque old bridge. Many trees surround and embower it, growing down to the very water's edge. There the branches droop gracefully, and behold their reflection in the rippling water, which they stoop to kiss. Now and then a fish plashes up in this well-stocked stream. You take a path to the left, indicated by the coachman, and gradually walk round towards the bridge, where the carriage has gone on to meet you. Half way in the walk you pause and look around. The spot is beautifully wooded, and looks almost wild and tangled. In a bend to the left is this Bridge of Balgownie, whose praises Lord Byron has sung. At the bottom of the rugged steep runs the river. You trace its course to the right. The cliffs open, as if to give passage to the stream, and beyond lazily sleeps the sea. Immediately before you, but on the opposite side, is an old water-mill, with a pair of wheels; one below the other; so that the water thrown off by the upper wheel is caught and utilized by the lower. Surely this is very Scotch-like in its economy of power? Any way it is a charming object in a most romantic scene. You get to the bridge at last; and note the beauty of its situation, of its surrounding trees and tangles: the reflection of all in the sparkling water. You would like to follow the banks far up out of sight. But time, like the ever-rolling stream, runs on; the carriage is waiting; you bid a reluctant farewell to the spot. So must we bid farewell to Aberdeen. We cannot pretend to enumerate its attractions, such as they are. Our business is with Orkney—and our space is limited.

We left Aberdeen at six o'clock on Friday evening. The boat was the *St. Magnus*. I had telegraphed to Aberdeen for a berth, but the boat had left Granton with many more passengers than it could accommodate; and I found that there was no chance even of a shake-down upon the floor. Another night to be passed as best it might. That would certainly have been above, but with darkness came bitter cold, and the decks were unsheltered.

It was a very small boat compared with the London steamer, and there were about 200 people on board. The greater number were bound for Wick, the last point to be touched before finally leaving the Scotch coast. We were due at Wick the following morning about four or five o'clock. The boat was so crowded that I believe many passengers stood throughout the night. Some, whose constitutions had been hardened perhaps by porridge and mountain air, and whose bones had been well seasoned by Scotch mists, patrolled the deck until daylight: their melancholy pacings resounding in the ears of the unfortunates below.

More unfortunate, certainly, than they need have been. At midnight, when a few happy passengers were asleep; and others were resting; and some, like myself, were passing the hours in an upright position, and the luxury of a cane-bottomed chair: wondering whether Orkney would contain sufficient to repay so much trouble and discomfort: sundry intoxicated Scotch drovers on board, entered the cabin with noise and loud tones, and scattered confusion broadcast. They had no right there under any circumstances. But these

Bridge of Balgownie.*

men freight the boats to a considerable extent with cattle, and in return are given a free passage, and tacit permission to do very much as they like. From midnight until four o'clock the cabin was a scene of riot and noise that aroused every peaceable inmate, and put to flight all attempt at sleep. Remonstrance was in vain. It is a shame and disgrace to any Company from interested motives to submit its passengers to the contact of a set of men whose place in the scale of creation it would be difficult to define. The sooner this

* Many of the drawings which accompany these papers are taken by permission from photographs by Messrs. Wilson and Co., of Aberdeen.

is put right the better for the reputation of all concerned, and the welfare of the passengers. It is said that this only happens occasionally, but no matter how seldom, it is still too often.

We reached Wick the next morning about five o'clock. Here the boat stayed some time, unloading passengers and cargo: when we started once more the ship had considerably lightened. We were now bound for Kirkwall, the capital of the Mainland of Orkney. There was a good deal of swell upon the sea, but the water was gradually taking a more beautiful and transparent colour, as we travelled northwards. The sky was clear and bright, the air seemed particularly rarified. We left Wick in company with a flock of sea-

KIRKWALL CATHEDRAL.

gulls; beautiful objects as they hovered over us with their snow-white breasts and black backs. Several of them kept in our wake for two or three hours, watching for anything that might be thrown to them; the smallest fragment did not escape their piercing eye.

So we went on. The Scotch coast lay to our left, a long line stretching outwards. Finally we passed John O'Groat's house. Before this we had seen one of the Orkney Islands. Gradually we got amongst them and passed now one, now another; until the chief island, or Mainland—Pomona, as some call it—came in sight. As we neared the town its proportions developed.

A small harbour and pier, in the foreground, numerous little craft at anchor therein. Beyond and behind this, the town. It looked, at first sight, poverty-stricken, without the slightest pretension to

beauty of any kind. The houses were small, and built of dull-grey stone, than which nothing can be colder or more repelling. Nothing can be said in praise of their design: fancy—eccentric or otherwise—has not been at work here. The windows appeared to have been let in at the pleasure of the builder, without any attempt at regularity. Square holes cut in the brickwork, with invisible sashes and no sills, so that from a distance they seemed unglazed, and the houses looked windowless, deserted, and left to ruin. This was a first view and impression of Kirkwall.

As we neared the pier, a cloud of sea-gulls flew and screamed around us with wild clang; here and there a cormorant stretched its long, straight, black neck from out to water, to disappear the next moment in a long dive after its prey. Around us, very much like a horse-shoe, the island sloped upwards, rose and fell in long sweeping undulations; went in and out in bays and sounds. Other islands stretched behind us in the distance, so that we seemed almost landlocked. The water on which we floated was of the most transparent aqua marine. Behind the houses, on rising ground, might be seen the venerable cathedral with its square tower: the pride of Orkney; the great attraction of Kirkwall. On this sunny day, the situation of the islands, rising out of the sea on all sides, the fine colouring of bright earth, sky, and water, in a peculiarly clear atmosphere, formed an undoubtedly beautiful scene.

As soon as the boat stopped at the end of the pier, porters from the two inns boarded her. I commended my luggage to the man of the "Kirkwall Hotel," and asked the way to the inn.

"You can't mistake it, sir," was the reply. "The first hotel you come to down the street."

I wondered which might be *the* street, and how it was to be discovered. When I grew wiser I found that Kirkwall consisted of one long street only—with sundry offshoots. It was therefore difficult to miss one's way. Straight down the pier, and the street in continuation: a narrow, badly-paved thoroughfare. In a few moments I reached the "Kirkwall Hotel," and secured a comfortable little bedroom and sitting-room. There I took up my abode for a season, and found Mr. Dunnet, the landlord, everything that was civil and obliging, anxious to further the comfort of his guests to the best of his ability. The house was quietly and most respectably conducted.

It was Saturday afternoon. We had landed at half-past one. Having fasted since leaving Aberdeen, it was time to end this involuntary penance. This matter quickly settled, I next asked my landlord as to the possibility of procuring a conveyance to call upon some friends who lived five or six miles from Kirkwall.

Mine host replied that a machine might be in readiness in an hour. I then first learned that in Orkney and Shetland conveyances are invariably called *machines*. On a subsequent occasion a visitor, remarking upon the custom, said that in another place, wanting a

simple one-horse trap, he had asked for a carriage. Presently there came round a dashing concern with a pair of horses, and he almost looked for a powdered coachman and footman. Had he asked for a machine he would have got what he wanted.

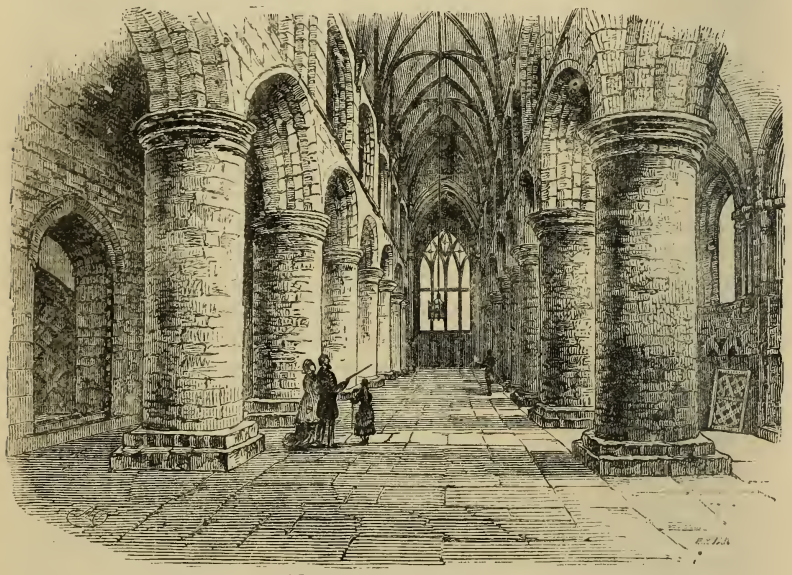
Upon the landlord's recommendation, I ordered the said machine, and wondered whether it would bear any resemblance to those bathing-machines in which one has to sit entombed in wooden walls. When it came round, it proved to be a species of dog-cart. It was impossible to say much for its build, the points of the horse, or the beauty of the harness. But in travelling in out-of-the-way places we soon cease to be fastidious, if we are wise. The driver, seeing that the animal was being attentively surveyed, declared, in somewhat jealous tones, that it was a very good one to go. He did not prove very far wrong. The animal had evidently been made for use, and not for ornament. In Orkney it might have been possible to get nothing of the sort.

That first drive may stand very much as a specimen of my subsequent impressions of Orkney. We went down the long street that winds round, and therefore, though long, is not straight. In the middle of the thoroughfare—so narrow that in many places two vehicles cannot pass each other—about two feet wide of stones had been laid down for the sake of the horses. On either side stretched irregular flags, with here and there holes in which an unwary foot might easily plunge and splash. Turning sharply to the left, we passed the imposing cathedral and found ourselves in the open country. The day had now passed over; the sky was of a dull leaden grey; nature wore her gloomiest aspect. Around and before us the land undulated —rose and fell, in wavy, not abrupt outlines. It was bare and cold-looking. Not a trace of any tree was to be seen, and, with the exception of a few trees in Kirkwall itself, scarcely one is to be found upon the islands. For hedges, as a rule, there are nothing but dry stone walls—the stones laid one upon another without cement. The land was partly cultivated; but corn, I think, does not grow in Orkney. The crops fall far short of the beauty and luxuriance of a milder climate. In this, Orkney stands at a disadvantage with Shetland. In Shetland there is little or no cultivation; all is grandly wild, as it was centuries ago. In Orkney you have a partial cultivation which deprives the country of that aspect of universal wildness which is a charm in itself. To the traveller from the south the semi-cultivation of Orkney yields no beauty of its own.

The road was good. We bowled along, not in style, but in tolerable comfort. To our left hand stretched the sea; and soon to our right also, in a bay. It came up into the land, and the hills surrounded it, and the scene was not without its attractions. But the absence of trees and shrubs was conspicuous, and gave a baldness to the landscape. Far as the sight could penetrate there was nothing but unbroken outlines and bare tracts of land: the dull-grey sky

threw its gloom over all. Scarcely a house was anywhere visible. We passed not a human being in our long drive. No sound but the echo of our horse's hoofs and the rumbling of the wheels. What solitude and repose! what desolation! what a spot for shattered nerves, or for any one tired of the world. If all the nuns and monks came to be turned out of their retreats, why not colonise in Orkney? There they would be shielded from the gaze of the vulgar and the three temptations, without troubling to shut themselves up in convent walls.

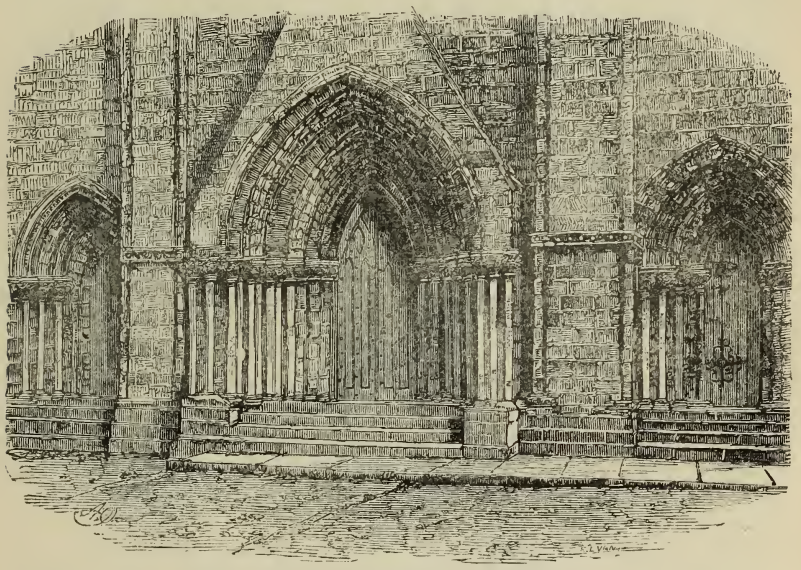
By and by we turned out of the white high road into a by-path, rough and rude. We fell into deep ruts, and we fell out of them. Through all, the horse never stumbled, but kept on its way, calmly



NAVE OF CATHEDRAL.

taking the rough with the smooth; an example of patience to those who sat behind and were not so calm. Soon we came in sight of a grey stone house, which the driver informed me was the manse, and my destination. At length we reached it. It stood alone. Beyond it the little church, which Sunday after Sunday and year after year sees the same faces within its walls, and father and son from generation to generation. Thus the minister becomes verily the pastor and father of his flock. A strange face on the Sunday morning is a rare occurrence. He watches his people grow old; the young pass into full life; he has christened them all, and calls them all by their baptismal names. A perfect state of existence to one whose love is in his work; whose heart is large enough to hold all the troubles and joys of his congregation; who sees one after another of his simple folk drop out from their places which know them no more.

Many a man in Orkney is a farmer on his own account, who in England would be no more than a day labourer. A small farmer, it may be, but his own master. Destitution and beggary seem to be unknown. You see poor, deserted-looking cottages or huts, built of the everlasting grey stone, in the same dry, loose manner as the walls. They look the essence of wretched discomfort. Yet they are not so. The occupants have their bit of land which they rent from the "laird," and even pay a good price for; and scarce one amongst them but has a little hoard put by for a rainy day, or old age, or some special purpose. Most of the men, too, are travellers. Few but have been "down South," or even further than



West Doorway, Kirkwall Cathedral.

that somewhat undefined boundary. Now and then, it is true, a cunning rogue gets in amongst them; a black sheep creeps into the little fold. Not long ago, a young man came down upon a poor widow, old and blind, and persuaded her that he was her long lost son. She kept him all the winter in warmth and idleness, to find at last that she had spent her money and her love upon a worthless impostor. So he was quickly turned away, and the poor widow was made twice desolate.

As we stopped at the manse I noted its situation. It was solitary in the extreme. The sea was before it in a bay. Far below lay the village: so far that we could just distinguish a dull-grey house and a small church. The surrounding land was barren and uncultivated most desolate in appearance; wild moorland. And yet, in a

short time, you grow to love it. Coming to it with reluctance, you in the end leave it with no less. The fresh breeze of the sea seemed laden with health-giving powers.

My friends pressed me to take up my abode with them. But I had brought work with me to Orkney, and for a time required the solitude of my room at the inn. So, in spite of a warm welcome, I was compelled for the present to relinquish the pleasure of their hospitality.

Hospitality ought to be taken as the key-note of the islands. Years ago : before the days of railroads and even long after : strangers were welcomed to the islands, whoever they might be, wherever they might wander. They might visit a house, and take up their abode, and be sure of a greeting, and scarcely have a name required of them. This free and unfettered hospitality has of necessity somewhat changed with the times. Everybody travels in these days. Many a wanderer would be an undesirable companion to receive unbidden into the bosom of the domestic hearth. As a rule, some introduction is necessary, however slight, before doors fly open, and you become one with the inmates of the sacred precincts they enclose. Nevertheless, as on most islands, kindness and hospitality distinguish the people. If you call upon a friend you are expected to remain a week. This is scarcely surprising considering the distances that sometimes separate houses. Not every day does a man care to drive thirty miles—as I did, when in Shetland—merely to pay a morning call.

I left my friends that afternoon, when the horse had had an hour or two's rest. Our drive back to Kirkwall naturally very much resembled our drive out : with the great difference that always exists between going and coming. How great the contrast, for instance, between going up a river and going down. In these islands they have not a choice of many ways ; they cannot greatly vary their journeys.

As we entered Kirkwall, we passed the cathedral on our right ; on our left the ruins of the Earl's palace and the Bishop's palace. With surprise we come, in a far off, out-of-the-world place, such as Orkney, upon this group of buildings of a bygone age : the cathedral still old and entire, with the exception of the steeple, and the palaces that have passed into substantial but beautiful ruins. Shame to the inhabitants that they are not kept in better order !

The cathedral of St. Magnus is of Scandinavian origin. It is of different periods of architecture. It was commenced by Jarl Ronald, about the year 1137, the result of a vow he had made to build a church should a certain expedition prove successful. By him it was dedicated to his uncle, St. Magnus, who had been foully murdered in the island of Egilshay, some twenty years before. The first period is in the Norman style of architecture, and the massive pillars and round arches, guiltless of decoration, possess in themselves something severely grand and dignified. The next period is Gothic, with its

beautiful pointed windows, but very little decorated. The last portion was added in the 16th century by Bishop Reid.

The interior is cold and rugged, but it has a grandeur of its own that is very imposing. The chancel is shut out from the nave by a high screen of wood and glass, an unsightly object which destroys the harmony of the interior. You pass beyond into the choir or chancel, where is now held the service of the Established Church of Scotland. It is a beautiful bit of architecture, but spoilt by ugly, straight-backed, high pews, by galleries which peep out between the arches. The beautiful pillars have been miserably defaced by white-wash. One of these contains the heart of St. Magnus. Here, too, you find the two styles of architecture, Norman and Gothic. The east window is beautiful in form and design, measuring 36 feet in height, and 12 in breadth. The cathedral contains many ancient and curious tombstones and slabs, with quaint epitaphs, some of them too worn to be deciphered. I happened to mention the fact one day in the coffee-room of the inn to a worthy Scotchman, and quoted one of the epitaphs—"Here lies an honest gentleman"—"Ay! ay! sir," replied he: "but you go further and find a more remarkable record than that. The next tombstone beyond declares: 'Here lies *ane honest WOMAN!*'" It was impossible to avoid laughing at the tone of astonishment which expressed so doubtful a compliment to the fair sex.

The exterior of the building is simple, but grand in its severity. Cruciform in shape, the proportions are good. It is built on rising ground, which adds much to the general effect. The west doorway is most beautiful and ancient, with its mixture of red and yellow brick and its ornamental work crumbling to decay. The whole building is chiefly of red sandstone, but it has well resisted the lapse of ages. It is 236 feet long, and 56 feet wide: the cross is 92 feet long, and 28 feet wide. The tower is about 140 feet high: the steeple was struck down many years ago, and in place a small covering has been erected, which half ruins the general effect. It would be far better altogether removed. The surrounding houses are for the most part small, poor looking, from the nature of their design and material, and dull in aspect. The contrast is strange and violent, but only causes the cathedral to be grander and more imposing whilst it increases one's surprise at finding it there.

It was a difficult task to ascend the tower. Many of the steps are almost worn away, and the staircase narrows alarmingly. We came to the belfry. I was accompanied by two gentlemen—one of whom was a stranger like myself, and had preached the day before an eloquent sermon within those walls—and we pealed out a short salute to the town. One of the bells bore an inscription setting forth that it had been re-cast in Amsterdam; and quickly took me back in thought to the quaint old city I had so recently visited. Here, indeed, was a widely different scene.

We ascended yet higher, and went outside, and from the four quarters of the tower took a long view of the surrounding country. It was a mixture of calm, smooth sea and undulating land, barren and naked. Within the town a few trees had managed to grow into a somewhat stunted existence: a few gardens were pleasant oases amidst a desert of dreary houses. But in the surrounding country no tree nor shrub was visible. Far away in the seas other islands could be traced.

The town lay at our feet. The houses looked grey and desolate:

Cathedral and Ruins of the Earl's Palace.

the small courts, leading up to so many of them, dirty and poverty-stricken. But it is in the look that this exists, more than in the fact. Dirty they certainly are; and on a wet day their byways are almost impassable. But the destitute want and poverty that we hear of in other towns and countries seem to be little known in these islands. Its poorer population can live upon very little; most of the men are fishers; and if they can do nothing else they can generally catch their dinner. Herrings, too, abound, and may sometimes be had twelve for a penny. Fresh from the sea they become almost a delicacy. The Orcadians are in advance of the Dutch in this respect: they take care to cook their herrings.

FRANZ WERNER.

A Christmas Tale, founded on Fact. By Lois Selbon.

I.

"HAVE you seen Franz at all?" asked Herr Rudolph Werner of his brother Oscar one afternoon, as they were preparing to leave the office. "It is very strange he should not have come near the place since yesterday morning."

"I saw him last night," was the rejoinder. "He came in to spend an hour with Francisca, who was not very well. You know those two are great friends. He said then he was not sure about coming to the office to-day: he might have to go out to the works."

"Does it strike you, Oscar, that Franz goes to the works very often? that he has been singularly absent-minded of late? And very irregular here?"

"Franz is not as regular as he used to be, Rudolph; or perhaps," he added hesitatingly, "quite as attentive to things as he ought to be in a house that has you for its chief. But we must not forget that business never was much to Franz's liking. He only took to it on leaving the University because you urged it."

Herr Rudolph's brow darkened at the suggestion. After a moment's silence Oscar continued:

"There is something else, Rudolph, that both my wife and I have noticed about Franz lately—he looks very ill, and is decidedly out of spirits. He used to be so full of fun: now you hardly ever hear him laugh."

"I have seen him looking moody and not himself occasionally," replied Herr Rudolph. "But the chief point is this irregularity, which *must be stopped*. Think of the example, Oscar! I have never allowed the smallest infringement of rules, and I shall certainly not begin now. I shall speak to Franz seriously."

And with these words Herr Werner buttoned up his coat, and strode out of the office with the firm, decided step of a man who never has given way an inch and never will.

The speakers were brothers. The elder, Rudolph Werner, was at the head of a leading iron and steel firm in South Germany. He was a remarkably shrewd, intelligent man, yet so proud and haughty that the latter qualities occasionally blinded him to his own best interests, if those interests did not relate to matters of business. He was proud of his self-made name, proud of his well-known integrity; above all, proud of his justice. Strict justice could always be got at the hands of Herr Rudolph Werner, but woe to the man who hoped

for sympathy and indulgence from him. His two younger brothers, Oscar and Franz, who had successively become his partners, looked up to him with boundless admiration, but with great awe as well. He had made his will their law since the day when, at eleven years of age, he had ordered them to shoulder their tiny bundles and follow him into the wide world to seek their fortunes. After they had risen to fame and fortune, the second brother, Oscar, had married the pretty and penniless daughter of an old and noble house, and Rudolph Werner had been perfectly satisfied with the match. "She brings no money," he observed, "but we do not want it, and the connection is all we could wish for." He himself had married his old master's daughter, Gretel, years before. He had loved her from the day that her father, worthy Hans Preis, had taken in the three lads, weary and travel-stained, and pretty Gretel had offered to be their sister and playmate. Both marriages had turned out singularly happy ones.

The above conversation had taken place in Rudolph's own private room in the counting-house. Oscar looked much troubled, for he had given a shrewd guess himself as to the reason of Franz's frequent absences from work, and dreaded the idea of his elder brother's thoughts taking the same direction. He determined to consult his wife, and did so that same evening.

"Do I know what is the matter with Franz?" cried Francisca. "Why, of course I do! He is head over ears in love! How stupid you men are—I have seen it for ever so long; but either the love is hopeless, or it is wasted upon some one we should not approve of. I think the latter is the more likely of the two, for if not, I feel sure Franz would have made me his confidant."

"Whichever way it is, Francisca, you must stand his friend now, and get at the bottom of the matter. Rudolph is very much vexed at his frequent absences from the counting-house, and is going to speak seriously to him on the subject. You know what that means. There is no saying how Franz may take it in his present mood."

Francisca's answer was cut short by Franz's sudden appearance. He stood still, looked at them a moment, and then exclaimed:

"How solemn you both look! Talking about me, I shouldn't wonder! I thought I heard my name mentioned as I opened the door. What's the matter?"

"Why were you not at the office this morning, Franz?" began Oscar. "You know you ought to be more regular, and especially more particular in making your excuses to Rudolph."

"I thought so," replied Franz, rather scornfully. "What more?"

"Rudolph asked me to-day what takes you out to the works so often," continued Oscar, looking Franz steadily in the face. "In fact—he has made up his mind to speak seriously to you about it, and you know what that will end in."

"Oh, yes, I know," said Franz, bitterly. "I shall be told to marry, only he must choose the wife. I know all about that, but—

look here, Oscar, once for all, *I will not bear it.* I will only marry the woman I choose for myself, or I will not marry at all. You say Rudolph wants to talk to me? He shall do it to-night. I want to talk to him too, and I will go now, and have it over."

Without another word he jumped up in hot haste, snatched his hat off the table, and was out of the room in a moment. Oscar looked after him, and shook his head. He himself would have avoided a "serious" talk with Rudolph at all risks: and he was not fiery-tempered when roused, like Franz.

II.

Whilst Rudolph and Oscar had been talking over the change that had come over Franz in the earlier part of the day, Franz himself was galloping hard on the high road to Hilgendorf. The day was frosty, and the horse scattered showers of diamond dust all around him as he flew along the well-known road, and stopped almost of his own accord at the door of a little cottage on the outskirts of the village not far from the Werners' works. Everything looked beautiful and bright in the wintry sun. The young man, with the light of hope in his eyes, was out of the saddle and under the little porch at one bound. At the same moment the door opened, and a young and most beautiful girl came out with her finger on her lip.

"Hush," she said. "Mother has just fallen asleep. She never closed her eyes last night."

"Lisa, I must speak to you," said Franz, pleadingly. "If I cannot come in, where can we go? I have so much to tell you."

The girl hesitated. "It is the last time," she murmured to herself; "it surely cannot be wrong. I, too, have much to tell you, Franz. Come this way; we can go to the little seat, near the window, and then I can hear if mother calls for me."

Franz, after tying his horse to a tree, came and stood before her. He felt happy and joyous, whilst the young face before him was sad and downcast. But the deep blue eyes were brave and steadfast, looking up at Franz.

"After what I told you last Sunday, you ought not to have come again, Franz. Not that it matters much now—and perhaps it is as well." Here her lips began to quiver; but she controlled herself and went on. "For it is the last time we shall meet."

"But, Lisa, I *could* not stay away," Franz broke in, impetuously. "The two last days seemed as if they would never end. I cannot live without you," he went on, passionately; "and now I have quite determined, since you will not engage yourself to me secretly, to *force* Rudolph into giving his consent."

The girl looked at him earnestly. At his first words, a ray of

hope had come to brighten her sweet face, but it soon faded away, and the old look of quiet resignation took its place.

"Dear Franz, we will not lose our last precious moments in going over the old ground again. You know in your heart a secret engagement would not be right. Already the neighbours are beginning to talk because you come here; just as they did in the town. I thought you would have believed me then, and not sought me out afterwards."

"But, Lisa, I could not help it: I must see you. I have only kept it from Rudolph lest he should prevent my coming."

"I know it well," she answered, sadly; "but *you* know it can never be. We are proud, though so poor, and of no account in the world. Your brother's consent you will never get. Remember, he is your guardian, and, according to our laws, you cannot marry without it. Even if you could, Franz, should I ever feel happy, knowing I had sown dissension amongst you all? No, no, there is only one right way—we must part!—yet—I am glad you came once more, just to say good-bye!" A sob rose in her throat, and she trembled all over. "Franz, we are going away to-morrow—far away! Farther away than Hilgendorf is from D., that was no use, you see," and she gave a sad little smile.

"Going away, Lisa! What can you mean? You are joking!" Then, seeing she was quite in earnest, he burst out with: "You shall not go! you shall not be hunted from place to place for me. If that is why you are going, I promise you not to trouble you with my presence any more, whatever it may—"

"Hush, Franz, hush; it is all settled—you are not turning us out. It is best so in all ways. I shall be able to care for mother better in the new home—shall not be obliged to leave her so much alone. But do not try to find us out; you would never succeed; if you did, it would be of no use; you *know* your brother would never allow you to marry a penniless girl in his employment. This is what I wished to tell you, Franz,—and also to bid you farewell, once more—for ever." Her voice quivered, but her heart was firm; and devoted as she was to the man before her, she felt she must not break down, for he needed all the help she could give him, to bear the sudden, bitter pain, become so familiar to herself by days of thought and preparation.

"Lisa," he said at length, "you cannot mean what you are saying—going away for ever! Why should Rudolph be such a tyrant—though he has done so much for us? He *shall* give his consent."

"Don't Franz! It makes it so much harder to bear. Be patient—"

"Patient! how can you talk of patience, Lisa? If you can, I do not believe you care for me."

Lisa turned deadly pale. "*Care*," she said. "Oh! Franz, I did not want to make the parting harder for you than I could help. But, Franz, I care so much that the prospect seems like a living death to me. It is the leaving light and warmth behind, and going out into

cold and darkness friendless and alone! Death will be light in comparison with this!"

The last words were spoken dreamily. She was gazing far out to where a thin, dark line marked the horizon between the snow-laden sky and the snow-covered earth. The sun had disappeared, the landscape had become grey and mournful, and the girl shivered.

"Lisa," cried a feeble voice at this moment from within, "Lisa, where are you, my child?"

"There's my mother calling. Franz, will you not say a last word to me?" and she held out both her hands to him imploringly. "Forgive me, Franz, I cannot help it!" Then he seized her hands.

"Lisa, I cannot give you up. I will find a way out of it all. Only tell me where you are going."

"Lisa, Lisa," cried the feeble voice again.

"Never, Franz. Farewell, my dearest earthly friend, and may God bless you!"

"I must kiss you, Lisa."

"Once, for the last time," she murmured, and she held up her sad, sweet face to his.

He caught her to his heart, and gave her one long, lingering kiss; then she disengaged herself as quickly as possible and ran into the house. Untying his horse, he rode slowly away, miserable and wretched.

III.

The meeting between the elder and younger brothers that night ended stormily, as Oscar had feared. Rudolph began by telling Franz that he had heard rumours of his being often seen among the people employed in the warehouses, and lately a great deal at Hilgendorf; "and not at the works," he added somewhat sarcastically, looking keenly at his brother. He hoped that no more whispers of the kind would reach his ear, and that Franz would at last do him the favour of marrying. "You know it is the best way of stopping all these reports," he added. "Moreover, there is nothing like marriage for getting rid of any discreditable connection you may have formed."

The last words stung Franz to the quick. Lisa's pure, pale face rose before him; he saw her again as he had seen her but a few hours ago, putting all her happiness away from her, prepared to go into a world, strange to herself and her sick mother, only to get out of his reach. It all flashed across him in an instant—the harm he had done her already, the harm he might be doing her now—and he broke out into a torrent of passionate words.

"I know not what you have heard, Rudolph; but I came here to-night to tell you the truth, and you have made it easy for me. You want to know why I do not marry? It is because I have long loved a girl as good and pure as an angel; a girl as much above the girls that you have proposed to me as the day is brighter than the

night. But she is poor; she has no connections. Her father was only a schoolmaster; he could but give his child an excellent education. Four years ago he died, and left his sick wife to the sole care of his young daughter. They came here soon after; they were starving, Rudolph; and Lisa took a situation in your warehouses to keep her mother from want. Rudolph, only let me bring her to you! I loved her from the first moment I saw her. For a year I have been trying to win her; but——"

"Not much difficulty in that, I suppose," broke in Rudolph, with a contemptuous smile.

Franz barely controlled himself. He went on bitterly. "There you mistake, Rudolph. She is lost to me for ever, unless you help us. Listen to what your miserable pride has brought us to. Lisa Klein, one of the poorest sorters in your warehouses—*listen to it well*—has refused the hand of your brother."

"Refused you!" put in the elder brother, startled out of his habitual composure. "You have actually been such a fool as to offer to marry her!—and she has refused you?"

"She has refused me. What is more, because I would not take the refusal, and still tried to see her, she has this day bidden me farewell for ever. Before sunrise to-morrow she will be gone; without leaving a trace behind her."

"This is the most extraordinary story I ever heard," said Rudolph. "Going!—and you say she loves you—and is poor! And pray what reason does this paragon assign for refusing my brother?"

"Because she is poor, and unknown, and proud! Because she knows you would not give your consent to such a match; because she will not even be engaged to me without your knowledge and sanction."

"It sounds quite romantic; almost as good as a play. But she is right. The young woman has more sense than you have, Franz. The idea! *my* brother marrying a sorter in my warehouses! a girl picked up——"

"Hold there, Rudolph! Dare to say a word of that kind, and I will not answer for the consequences, though you are my brother. And now I swear to you that I will never marry any other woman than Lisa Klein."

Franz turned from the room with this, leaving his brother standing in amazement at the young man's unexpected audacity.

"Who would have thought it?" he soliloquised to himself. "But I will ride out and have a look at this girl: there's some trick in it. She would never refuse Franz."

But when on the following day Herr Werner ascertained for himself that the cottage was empty, and its occupants had left no trace behind them, he was astonished; and perhaps a little uncomfortable about his brother. On his return news awaited him, in the shape of a note from Franz.

"By the time this reaches you I shall be half-way to Franckfort. I cannot stay in D— now that *she* has gone. Perhaps by wandering from place to place I may find some clue by which to trace her.— Franz."

"Foolish fellow!" was his elder brother's comment. "On the whole, perhaps it is the best thing that could have happened. Nothing like change of scene for a love-sick brain! I hope he will not find the girl, though—but he could not marry her, thank Heaven, without my consent." With which comfortable reflection, Herr Werner forgot Franz and his vagaries for things of greater importance.

At long intervals Herr Werner would hear that a letter had come to Oscar or Francisca from Franz, but there was never any message for him, and as he asked no questions about the headstrong young man, no information was given him. Thus the weeks and the months went by eventlessly enough, till one day there came a letter addressed to the firm generally, in an unbusiness-like hand. It so happened that the head partner opened it.

"Oscar, Oscar," he called out hastily, a moment afterwards, "look at this! Some one must go off at once. I suppose it had better be you."

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Oscar, astonished at the sound of distress in his brother's voice.

"There; read for yourself. Franz is down with fever, and the doctors say here it is dangerous. Poor fellow! Ill!—all alone amongst strangers—dying, perhaps! Go at once, Oscar, and bring him back with you—if you can."

There were but few railways in Germany at that time, therefore Oscar's progress was very slow; at last, he did rumble into Franckfort, and found his way to Franz's abode. Franz was past recognising anybody. He was tossing about in the delirium of fever, raving of the unkindness of his brother Rudolph, his cheeks crimson, his eyes sunk and glittering. Then he would calm down for a time and call upon Lisa to come to him, imploring her to tell him where she had hidden herself. He was always seeking for her and never finding her!

This was the burden of his feverish wanderings, and for many days and nights Oscar despaired of his recovery. At last the crisis came—that deep sleep from which the fever-patient awakes to new life and strength, or which leads rapidly to the end, if he wake up at all on this side the grave. To Oscar's great joy, Franz's awaking was a renewal of hope, and he could write home a comforting letter to Rudolph, telling how their brother had recognised him with a faint smile on his white face.

That was a bright day for Rudolph Werner. A great fear had seized him—what if his tyranny had led to all this, and Franz should not recover! How gladly would he have given his consent to the

marriage over and over again under the influence of that terror, if that would have brought Franz back to health. But when the comforting letter came, the crust of pride, which had been melting fast, hardened again. He was most thankful to think the danger was past, but he was very glad that Franz had not found "that girl."

"Once get him back, and we will make it so pleasant for him here, that he will forget all about that stupid business—if the fever has not taken it out of him already!" he said to Gretel. So he sat down and wrote to Franz, telling him how happy he was at the thought of soon welcoming him home. Then Herr Werner rubbed his hands and looked happier than he had done for many weeks.

At last, on a hot evening in July, just six months after Franz had left home, the luxurious travelling carriage, bearing him and Oscar to D——, rolled into the old town and halted before Oscar Werner's house. Francisca and Rudolph were at the door in a moment, and it was with difficulty that they repressed all signs of alarm at Franz's altered looks. Pale, haggard, worn to a shadow, it was almost impossible to recognise the once bright, handsome face and figure. The meeting between the brothers was very touching. Neither alluded to the past; but before leaving him for the night, Rudolph patted Franz affectionately on the shoulders.

"You will be all right now, old fellow; you know what a capital nurse Francisca is."

But Franz did not recover as quickly as Rudolph had hoped. The journey had thrown him back, and it was quite the end of August before he was sufficiently well to get about by himself. And, once arrived at this point, he never got beyond it. Month followed month, and he appeared to get weaker instead of stronger. Nothing seemed able to rouse him.

Lisa's name had never once passed his lips. His brothers hoped that he had forgotten her, but Francisca thought otherwise. She had noticed how all his rides took him through Hildendorf, either on his way out or in. That, and seeing Lisa's name on the fly-leaf of a little book kept always in the young man's pocket, caused her to make up her mind to speak.

"Rudolph," she said to her brother-in-law, on the morning after she had come to the above determination; "Rudolph, I want to tell you something very serious. If you do not wish Franz to die, you must find 'that girl' for him."

Rudolph started and changed colour. "My dear Francisca, this is absurd; he has long got over that stupid affair. He is getting all right, and I hope to see him take to business again soon."

But Herr Werner moved a little uneasily in his chair, and there was not the usual decided ring in his voice. The next minute he asked, in his old authoritative way:

"Oh! I see. Franz has told you to speak to me about the matter, Francisca?"

"The girl's name has never been mentioned between us, Rudolph. Believe me, if ever a man fretted away his life in secret, Franz is fretting away his," Francisca added solemnly.

Rudolph looked very much disturbed and annoyed. "I had hoped never to hear of this affair again. Just think what *you* would feel if asked to associate with one of our work-people!"

Herr Werner thought he had hit straight home. To his chagrin, Francisca answered somewhat haughtily in her turn, "I own I do not follow you there. If the girl is a good girl, as she seems to be, and if she can make Franz happy, *I* shall certainly not object to her."

"You are very good, Francisca. I cannot help thinking you are mistaken."

IV.

It was some weeks after the above interview, that a travelling carriage stopped at the tiny hostelry of a hamlet about thirty miles north of Frankfort. Out of it stepped a tall, stately-looking man, whose head came in very rough contact with the rafters as he entered the low public room of the house. He called out in haughty tones, asking if there were any accommodation to be had, and if he could have anything to drink?

"An excellent bed and good beer, most gracious Herr," answered the smiling host. "And, indeed, we have some wine, too, that even the most gracious Herr might not despise—pure old Madeira. Only," he continued, scratching his head in some confusion, "I sent over the last bottle yesterday to widow Klein's. Well, she won't have begun it, perhaps—only Fräulein Lisa always will have the best for her mother. Here, Lotte," calling to his little daughter, "run over with my compliments to Fräulein Lisa, and will she send me back the wine for——"

"Lotte shall do no such thing," interrupted the stranger. "If the beer is good, it will do for me perfectly well." And the traveller, with temper much improved by the warmth and comfort of the great green stove, began to divest himself of his furs.

"And pray, mine host," said he, affably, "who is this widow Klein who drinks old Madeira in this out-of-the way place?"

"To tell the truth, gracious Herr, I cannot rightly tell who she is. She is just widow Klein to us here, always ill and seldom out of bed. Sometimes she lies on Fräulein Lisa's little sofa, poor soul."

"And who is Fräulein Lisa?" inquired the stranger.

"Oh, gracious Herr, our Fräulein Lisa is widow Klein's daughter. It is a good nine months ago since they came to live at Treburg. There was an opening for a respectable young woman to take the sewing class in our school, and to make the women's caps—a deal of work in those great caps, gracious Herr,—and but few can make them; the only woman who could died last year. How Fräulein Lisa heard of this I know not, nor where she came from, for they never talk about themselves. But we all liked the young woman

when she applied for the situation, she was so sweet and modest like. She had not been in Treburg a week, before all the children loved her; and as for the women, they cannot prize her enough."

The stranger got up and began to get into his furs again. "I will take a stroll, whilst you prepare dinner," he said, and stepped out into the village street.

There was still some daylight left; the cold winter sun had just sunk behind the old church tower, and the little cottage windows glowed in its last lingering rays. A few minutes brought the stranger to a small white house, standing somewhat back from the road, from whence proceeded children's voices singing a well-known Christmas hymn in parts. The traveller's curiosity was aroused; he walked up the little garden path, and under cover of some shrubs, looked in at the window. He discovered a number of little people, seated on low forms, suited to the length of their short limbs; and, whilst their busy fingers plyed the needle they practised the pretty hymn they were to sing round the Christmas tree. The teacher sat with her back to the window. All that our traveller could see of her was a slight grey figure, bent a little forward, as if the wealth of golden hair, coiled up tightly at the back of the small head, were too heavy a burden. The room was a corner one, with windows on two sides, so the watcher went round the cottage, and tried again to get a glimpse of what he had guessed at once to be the sewing school. By the teacher's side stood a bed, in which lay a pale, gentle, emaciated-looking woman, listening eagerly to the children's voices. The teacher herself seemed to be letting her thoughts wander a little; her hands had fallen into her lap upon the work she had been setting for little fingers to do, and her deep blue eyes were fixed absently on the distant hills, visible from the window by which the watcher stood. "What a wonderful face to be in a peasant's cottage!" mused the traveller. Suddenly the girl started and coloured violently. In his eagerness to see more of her, the watcher had leant forward too far, and she had caught sight of him, that was clear. There was nothing now for it but to go round and knock at the door. A very sweet voice said "Come in," and to the inquiry as to whether widow Klein lived there, the same voice answered "Yes, this is my mother," motioning the stranger to the bed.

The sick woman tried to raise herself to welcome her visitor. "Lisa, get the gentleman a chair by me, my child," which Lisa did, moving as if in a dream, but looking so graceful and attractive, that the stranger, whom my reader has long since guessed to be Herr Rudolph Werner, found it difficult to reply to the widow's questions. Whilst he was wondering whether she knew him or not, the clock struck four. Immediately the children began to put up their things, and filed out one by one.

When the last child had gone, Herr Werner spoke. "I have long known your name Fräulein Lisa, and now I am glad—nay I am

thankful, to have made your acquaintance. Will you shake hands with me?"

Once more the colour mounted to the girl's temples, even dyeing her fair throat crimson; but she put out her hand and said simply: "Thank you, Herr Werner."

"You know me, then?"

"I knew you the moment I saw you out there," pointing to the window. "I have often seen you in D——."

The widow broke in with feverish haste. "Lisa, is this Herr Rudolph Werner? and—you knew it, and never told me! and you let him come in!" Then turning to the intruder, she went on in a beseeching voice: "Why do you come here, sir? Your brother has not been near us since we left Hilgendorf; we have never even heard of him; I assure you most solemnly we have not. And we tried so hard to leave no trace behind; Lisa arranged it all: and then I thought we were going to be quiet and happy once more! Oh Lisa—" and here the poor invalid broke into a wail—"must we go again? can we never rest?"

"Hush, hush, mother!" said the girl soothingly, though trembling herself in every limb; "you are nervous to-day. I will give you some of your wine; it will calm you."

"I assure you Frau Klein, upon my word of honour, I am the only member of my family that has an idea of your present abode. You were very clever, Fräulein Lisa, but you see I have found you out for all that: but I own I had hard work to do it," he added, smiling kindly, and the girl felt a little re-assured and trembled less. "And now it will depend entirely upon you whether the secret remain between ourselves, or be made known to my brother Franz."

At this unexpected turn in his little speech—most unexpected indeed to Herr Werner himself, but he was already completely conquered—Lisa began to tremble again. He led her to a seat; and then when her colour returned and she appeared able to listen, he spoke very gently, taking her hand.

"Don't be afraid of me, Lisa; I want to make up for a great mistake I made; the mistake, my dear, of not having known you a year ago. I see how you have suffered, and so has he, poor fellow. Ah! I know all about it, you see," he added cheerfully, as he saw the painful blush come and go at the mention of his brother. "I have found you out on purpose to talk it all over with you, for everything now is in your hands—but I see your mother needs rest, so I will go. Frau Klein," he added, turning to the bed, "may I come and sit with you for an hour later? I am anxious to have a little more talk with this daughter of yours, and with you too. I think we shall be friends, in spite of the ogre you once thought me, Fräulein Lisa."

Herr Werner walked back to meditate upon how nearly his pride had been death to his brother, and ruin to the life's happiness of

this young creature, for whom he had already conceived a strange liking. "If only it is not too late for Franz," he mused sadly; "he is ill, *very* ill; I cannot doubt it now;—he is but the wreck of his former self. Will she consent? God grant she may! Poor child, poor child!"

Oddly enough when he walked back to the white cottage that evening, he did not feel half as sure of being able to secure his brother's happiness as he had been in the morning. The greater value the prize was assuming in his eyes, the greater became the fear of losing it. He felt all his future peace of mind as well as his brother's happiness depending now upon the decision of this girl! What if she should not consent to help them after all?

V.

Christmas Eve that year ushered itself in with much shovelling and scraping away of snow. Every corner of the town had to be swept and garnished before nightfall for the coming festival. But the shovelling and the scraping had a cheery ring about them. They told of work and wages, and consequent food and warmth in lowly houses for that one night at least. "Peace on earth and goodwill towards men," is the motto of the day, and he must be a waif and stray indeed who does not find someone to welcome him under the Christmas tree, on Christmas Eve in Germany. The Oscar Werners had no tree, for they always spent their Christmas at the elder brother's house, where all connected with the firm, from the partners down to the youngest errand boy, were won't to assemble under the Christmas tree to receive presents and spend a joyous evening.

This year, however, a shadow had fallen upon the Werner families. Franz, instead of making progress, appeared to get weaker every day. He seemed restless and miserable too. Nothing soothed him but sitting at a window, from which the tower of the Hilgendorf church could be seen on clear days. He had positively refused to make an effort to join his brother's Christmas party. "You are so good to want me, Francisca," he had said, when she had gently tried to urge him once more, "but I cannot—I cannot do it. You are all so good and patient with me, and yet—yet even you do not understand me!" and then, as if speaking to himself, he continued, "You do not understand the misery of despairing to forget!" Then Francisca's blood had boiled within her as she thought of Rudolph's injustice, as she deemed it, to his youngest brother, and had determined to make one more effort on his behalf.

"Rudolph!" she had exclaimed, the moment she caught sight of him on the following morning, not waiting for Oscar and Gretel to be out of hearing; "Rudolph, things cannot go on as they go now. You must, you shall do something for Franz! He is too ill to go into the world and work, and do what might cure another man. What can you be all thinking about here," turning to Gretel, "to let

Franz die by inches without holding up a finger to save him, and all for an *idea!* But," she went on sadly, "it may be too late; who knows if even joy could rouse him sufficiently now?"

Rudolph looked grave, but listened patiently. "Do not judge me too harshly, Francisca. Believe me, I feel convinced that when once all this Christmas rejoicing is over, Franz will rally and begin to mend."

The short December day soon came to a close, and with the first approach of darkness, countless tiny rays of light began to dart out from many windows in quiet by-streets—the richer occupants of first-floors in the more frequented thoroughfares beginning their Christmas revellings at a somewhat more fashionable hour.

The Werner party hurried along, barely giving the children time to exclaim with delight as each new set of twinkling lights burst upon their gaze, and were reflected a hundredfold in all the frozen puddles and crackling snow. It was very cold, and they were a little late. The delay was occasioned by Francisca, who was walking some little way behind the rest, and she had hold of Franz's arm. At the last minute, by a clever stratagem, she had got him to come, after all. When the rest had been ready to start, Francisca had quietly kept her seat by Franz's side and continued her work.

"You will be late, Francisca," he had said.

"I am not going," was the quiet rejoinder.

"Not going!" returned Franz, in amazement.

"You surely did not think I was going to leave you here all alone on Christmas Eve, Franz?"

Then he had got up without another word and fetched his hat and coat, telling her to be quick, or she would miss the opening of the doors. And so it had come to pass that Franz was with them. The air and the exertion seemed to do him good at first; but had it not been for fear of paining Francisca, he would have turned before they reached his brother's house. Happily for him, they were all ushered into a large room adjoining the great hall, just as the first signal for opening the doors was being given, and everyone was too much engaged to notice the new arrivals.

All the children were congregated around the door leading into the hall. They were in a state of frantic excitement, and could hardly be kept from kicking and screaming. Herr Rudolph Werner and his wife were, of course, invisible. True to the old tradition, the "Hausherr" and "Hausfrau" were giving the finishing touches to their tables, and then lighting the tree together. At last the great moment arrives: the bell rings a second time; the large folding doors are thrown open by the master and mistress of the house; a tremendous blaze of light from the tree, reaching from floor to ceiling, dazzles everybody; the children give a great shout and make a rush; inextricable confusion prevails for a moment, and then it gradually appears that there is a place prepared for every-

body at the great horse-shoe table. Herr and Frau Werner lead each one to his appointed place. Of course the presents are numerous and varied, but one thing is the same for each one there, children and grown-up people; and that is the orthodox plate-full of gingerbread, apples, and nuts, and by its side the much-prized "Stolle;" a plain, oblong cake covered with sugar, and baked for the occasion. It would not seem like Christmas in the "Fatherland" without these time-honoured accessories.

After everybody had got settled and glanced at their own peculiar property, it began to be noticed that there were two empty places at the head of the table, without any presents excepting the "Stolle" and the gingerbread. People looked at each other and wondered. "Where is Herr Franz? Cannot he come? Will not he come?" was whispered in low tones round the table.

And then, "Where is Franz?" was suddenly repeated out loud by Herr Rudolph Werner. Having found his brother standing alone in the next room as if unable to face all the light and joy of the hall, he slipped his arm into his affectionately, and drew him gently to his empty place under the tree. "There is hardly anything here for you, Franz. You have been so little yourself of late, that Gretel and I scarcely knew what would give you pleasure. I have got one present for you, however, but I would not bring it in, lest after all you might not care for it, so I left it in the library. Perhaps you will just go in and look at it?" And before Franz well knew what he was doing, Rudolph, who had never let go of his arm, had drawn him from the table to the study-door, had opened it, and shut it behind his brother.

Coming out of the glare of the tree, Franz found himself almost in the dark, for the large room was only lighted by a single lamp suspended from the ceiling. He was not aware of the presence of another person, and a soft voice said "Franz," and a white-robed figure flitted across the room and stood for a moment under the lamp. Franz felt as if he were dreaming. Could it be, or were the old visions haunting him again? "Lisa," he cried, stretching out his arms towards her, "Lisa, my darling! You here! *Here in Rudolph's house! Is it reality*—or are the phantoms mocking me again?" and he stood as if spell-bound, and very white.

"Yes, dear Franz, it is true, thank God, though I can hardly believe it myself!" And looking towards the door behind which Rudolph had disappeared, she added: "He has been so good to me!" Going up nearer to him, she lightly laid her hand on his arm, looking up at the rigid face a little anxiously. At that touch a sense of reality seemed to come to him; he started, took both her hands in his, and looked searchingly into her face.

"*My* Lisa still?" he asked, "come back never to leave me again? Will you promise now to be my wife, here under Rudolph's roof?"

"Yes Franz," she answered firmly but so low that he drew her

close to him to hear the words better a second time. Then as she hid her face on his shoulder, the tears, kept back so bravely when they parted, came to her relief and kept her poor heart from bursting in its overflow of joy and gladness. "Oh! Franz," she said presently, "I am so happy, so happy! it has been weary waiting!"

Before he could answer the door opened. "Well children," said Rudolph Werner, glancing in and seeing the complete success of his little plot; "here are a number of people waiting to see what Franz's Christmas present is like. They seem to think that I have behaved very shabbily to him this year, seeing nothing but apples and cakes in his place. Come, Lisa, and help me to redeem my character."

The girl looked up at Herr Werner shyly and inquiringly, but at once took the arm he offered her. He stepped across the threshold into the brightly lighted hall. Close beside the Christmas tree Herr Werner stopped. There was a breathless silence. All eyes were turned on Lisa's fair bent head, and upon Franz, who stood close behind her, with bright eyes and figure erect, as he had not been seen to look for many a long day. "My friends," began Herr Rudolph Werner, "you have been wondering at my brother's empty place? It is filled up at last, and he stands before you; but his presents," and here the clear, strong voice grew husky, "he cannot show you. But I can tell you what they are—Love, and happiness, and rest for a wearied heart and mind! Are not these worth having, though they make no show? They have been brought to him to-night by this dear girl," and he drew Lisa a little forward, stroking her hand encouragingly. "It was not easy work to find her, but thank God I succeeded at last, and then at my earnest request, she and her sick mother accompanied me hither, and Liza promised never to leave my roof again until she did so as my brother's wife."

This was the signal for a general buzz and hum of congratulation, and Herr Werner spoke once more. "My friends, before our lights have quite burnt down, let us sing a Christmas hymn of thankfulness around the tree, according to the time-honoured custom of our fathers. Let it be the same one that our dear Lisa, here, was teaching her little pupils when I was fortunate enough to see her for the first time, and then we will all drink to the health and happiness of Franz and Liza." With a trembling voice Lisa began the first line of the well-known Christmas hymn: "Heilige Nacht, stille Nacht" ("Holy night, peaceful night"), in which old and young joined.

"I owe you a grudge, all the same, Rudolph," said Francisca, when he was taking her into supper. "You might have let me into the secret!"

"My dear Francisca, my pride was so overcome by your noble generosity that I felt it a duty to take all the responsibility of the search and its results upon myself. I have succeeded far beyond what I hoped and expected; and I trust that a look at that sweet, patient young face yonder may always remind me of what my pride

might have brought me to. You might not always be by my side to help me, you know," he added, pleasantly.

In a few weeks Franz and Lisa were married. Franz did not get well and strong at once. It took Lisa more than a year to nurse him back to that. But, at last, he was able to return to his old place in the counting-house, and delighted his brothers by his steady application to business. He had an aim in life now. His darling Lisa and a little Fränzchen had to be provided for.

NEW YEAR'S NIGHT.

Now bid the bells ring out!
Now let the red wine flow!
With swelling music and joyous shout,
With laughing lip and with cheek aglow,
Usher him in who waiteth without
In the dim starlight;
Usher him in with never a doubt,
This New Year's night.

Oh, he is fair and strong,
His eye hath an eagle glance.
Awaken the echoes, lute and song;
Swift be the whirl of the mazy dance.
Mirth and joy to the young belong,
And love and light;
'Tis fitting we be a festive throng,
This New Year's night.

Is it friend or foe we meet,
Gay with the flush of youth?
Is it life we hail, or death we greet?
Little—aye, little we know, forsooth.
But the strain is gladsome and hope is sweet,
And the lamps are bright,
And merrily move the dancers' feet,
This New Year's Night.

SYDNEY GREY.

"THE BRITISH WORKMAN."

SOME little time ago a public-house was established in our parish, and, though I am aware there are many others conducted on the same principle throughout the country, a short account of it may not be without interest.

This public-house was got up by several gentlemen in the neighbourhood, for the purpose of discouraging drinking, by offering rival attractions to the frequenters of the common inns. A house was chosen as near the cab-stand as possible, and a respectable man and his wife were placed in it as managers. A subscription of some five hundred pounds provided for the furniture, fittings, and so on; and the receipts were so large that when it had only been in working order a few months, the undertaking was nearly, if not quite, self-supporting. The chief complaint was that the rooms were too small; that there was not one large and airy enough for musical and scientific entertainments. For something of this sort is provided nearly every Saturday evening by the kindness of amateur friends, and there is usually a large attendance. Thus the funds are greatly increased, and many a man's wages saved for his family, which might otherwise have been spent in intoxicating liquors, the absence of these being the one great distinction between the "British Workman" and the ordinary public-house.

On the ground-floor is the refreshment-room, handsomely fitted up with velvet-cushioned seats and marble-topped tables. Here may be had, at a low rate, tea, coffee, cooling drinks of all kinds, chops, ham and eggs, bread and butter, sausages, pies, and such like, served in or on tasteful glass and crockery, in a neat and orderly manner. Above, are the reading or lecture rooms, where papers of all shades of political opinion and numerous weekly and monthly magazines strew the tables. These are the contributions of different well-wishers—in the case of the local papers, of the publishers or proprietors themselves. A few pictures, also gifts, ornament the walls; and a good library is in process of formation. On the third story are the smoking-rooms, used also for billiards and bagatelle, and for various other games, such as chess, draughts, and dominoes; but gambling is strictly forbidden, and a sharp watch kept, the forfeiture of membership, in the case of members, being the punishment for a breach of the rule. For the use of the billiard-table there is a slight extra charge, otherwise all the rooms and their contents are open to any one on the payment of a penny as entrance-fee, or by the order of some form of refreshment. The subscription for members is twopence a week; one-and-sixpence a quarter; or five shillings a year.

The Saturday evening entertainments are varied as much as

possible, the concerts being perhaps the most popular, and having moreover the effect of developing much native musical talent. Different members of the "British Workman," and ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood, meet together and practise their parts beforehand; and a piano always keeps its place in the reading-room. Lectures on different subjects are given from time to time; and on one occasion there was a fine display of microscopes lent by their owners, the tables on which they stood being beautifully decorated with ferns and flowers.

The weekly entertainments, if not the "British Workman" as a whole, may be regarded as the outcome of an enterprise tried with some success during the previous winter by two gentlemen interested in the welfare of our labouring people. They hired a large room for Saturday nights, where tables were conveniently set out, and a substantial tea was provided for all who chose to attend. The proceedings began at half-past seven, when tea-urns were brought in, to be presided over by ladies—friends of the promoters of the meetings. The men, seated on forms round the tables, then made a hearty meal of the sandwiches, plum-cake, and bread and butter prepared for them, conversation on the current topics of the day going on the while. Afterwards the tables were removed, and the forms placed so as to make something of a semi-circle around a reading-desk. Here one of the hosts took his stand, and read for about the space of half an hour from some book of interest—perhaps a story of moral tendency, clothed in a dress at once humorous and touching. The reading over, the men were invited to sing or to give such recitations as they chose. The pieces selected were mostly racy and original sketches or ballads, in the peculiar dialect of the county; the songs being of great variety, and usually also of great length—including the broadly comic, the ultra-sentimental, and the downright doleful. A piano was hired, on which the accompaniments could be played if required, but these were seldom called for save in the rare case of ordinary drawing-room airs; and now and then a little purely instrumental music was given by way of change. The meetings wound up by the united singing of some popular hymn, the reading of a short passage from the Scriptures, and a hearty mingling of voices in the Lord's Prayer. And though all was generally over by ten o'clock, I scarcely think the men then dismissed would feel strongly tempted to spend the next hour in the grosser conviviality of the common public-house.

How the keepers of public-houses like our "British Workman" I cannot say; but the rest of our little world hereabouts is mostly warm in its favour; and my readers will, I doubt not, join us in wishing it, together with its fellows throughout the kingdom, an earnest "God-speed."

EMMA RHODES.

THE WHITE HEN.

A True History.

IN a small rural district more than a hundred miles removed from this great metropolis, the wish to give some little help to the sufferers of this terrible war, took possession of the inhabitants. Not that they had much to spare; but example is contagious, humanity is catching, and the heart-rending accounts they daily read of the need of aid and the lists of contributions often published, excited their pity and their emulation. A bazaar was hastily got up in the village; and the ladies organizing it went about asking for contributions both in money and kind.

Mr. Cartright — a small farmer, himself struggling against ill-fortune—received them rather ungraciously.

"We are sent to you, Mr. Cartright, to beg of you to contribute ——"

"Sent, ma'am! Who sent you?"

"The committee. Think of the sufferings caused by this dreadful war that's raging. Everyone, I'm sure, will be happy to give what he can. You might glory in doing it, Mr. Cartright."

"I want aid myself, ladies. Charity begins at home."

"Oh, surely you will not refuse us! Think of the poor creatures —the wives and children—dying on the road-side by hundreds. Their dwellings sacked and burned, their poor crops destroyed. Could you not spare a sovereign?"

"My own crops have turned out a failure this year, ma'am. As to a sovereign, I often feel the want of one myself. Money can't be much scarcer with the people you are begging for than it is with me."

"Then in kind, Mr. Cartright," urged these persistently arduous emissaries. "Can't you give us something in kind—of which money may be made at the bazaar?"

The farmer, not a bad-hearted man, but really very poor himself, stood wondering how he could get rid of these gentlewomen. Had he possessed money, he would have given some readily. Turning his hands about in his empty pockets, as he faced the window, an old white hen of his, stalking about the yard outside, set up a "croak, croak."

"I'm not much better off in kind than I am in coin," said he; "my stock has dwindled. There's that old white hen there—you may have that if you like, ladies."

Sure such an offering was never tendered! The ladies thought he might be laughing at them, and felt inclined to resent it. They rose from their chairs with dignity.

"She might sell for something; she has been a good hen in her day," added the farmer; whose intention was at least genuine.

They saw that it was, now, but yet hesitated. Still, every few shillings would swell the amount of the sum total they hoped to send in, and of course a white hen *would* sell. After a few hasty words exchanged between themselves, they thanked Mr. Cartright, accepted the hen, and begged him as a favour to keep it until the day of the bazaar.

Accordingly, on the morning of that auspicious day, an old wicker cage was provided and the white hen arrived. At various convenient stage points in the room devoted to the bazaar, might be read the following notice, written in large, commanding text hand. For the committee, determined to make the most of the odd contribution, had decided on putting it up for sale; and a real auctioneer undertook to preside, and to do his best.

IMPORTED HEN

TO BE SOLD

THIS DAY

BY PUBLIC AUCTION.

The poor old biddy, "white with the snows of many winters," was exposed to view in her cage of wicker, right over the refreshment stall. Two eggs (boiled) taken from the counter were placed in the cage with her.

Nothing in all the bazaar attracted so much attention as this announcement and this white hen.

After stopping to read the notice, as scores did stop, blocking up the way, they pushed their way to the cage. Speculation was rife; curiosity reigned in every breast. Imported! Where had she been imported from? What were her peculiar merits? Innumerable were the conjectures passed about as to the antecedents of this wonderful hen.

The day passed pleasantly away. Farmers came with their families, and villagers came, and a few county people came; a bazaar was a novelty in the neighbourhood, and the sales were not bad. At last, when the afternoon was drawing to a close, the great auction sale of the day came off—that of the white hen.

Mr. Sanders, the auctioneer, mounted the rostrum provided for him, amid the cheers of the impatient spectators, who fancied they were about to hear the past history and pedigree of this remarkable fowl. He held aloft the caged bird for some minutes, turning it round and about, that all eyes might see and be satisfied. Then, putting it on the stand before him, he took up his hammer, and began.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have the ecstatic pleasure of displaying before you this imported hen. A hen of most rare and unattainable qualities—a hen that can't be beat, even with a stick, unless you

first take her out of the cage—a hen that is supposed to be of the best breed of hens extant—an im-port-ed hen——im-port-ed; I say ——"

"If you please, sir," interposed a timid voice, "where's she imported from?"

"Ah!" replies Mr. Sanders, "if I only considered myself at liberty to tell you, I think I may safely say you would be surprised. You've heard of the countries over the sea—California—Kamschatka—Guinea Land—Jericho—well, I don't say she is from anyone of them, or which other she is from; only I do say you might be surprised. An im-port-ed hen! Who'll give me a bid? This hen is to be sold for the good of the cause. She's a hen that will fetch just what she'll bring, and no mistake—a real, live, jolly, happy old hen. See her laugh! A facetious old hen, I tell you. Hear her chuckle! A profitable old hen—is said to have laid fifteen eggs in ten days, and sometimes a good many more. Finest old hen to be found this side of—Poland. Who makes the first bid?"

"Half-a-crown"—from a farmer's wife.

"Half-a-crown. Thank you, ma'am. Half-a-crown I am bid. Grand old hen! The like of it not to be found outside this cage—fifteen eggs in ten days!—an egg and a half a day! Half-a-crown for the best white hen—the oldest and the wisest. Knows how to lay as many eggs again as a young and silly pullet—tough and strong—better constitution than hens that are not imported—evidently stands migration well. Look at her! Never suffered from sea-sickness, as our simple hens might suffer; never made a wry face or lost a meal—when she could get it. Grand old hen! Who doubles the bid?"

"Five shillings."

"Five shillings. Many thanks, sir. Here's this beautiful import-ed hen going for five shillings. A real, live, white hen. What a chance to possess her!"

"Seven and sixpence."

"Seven and sixpence. Thank you, Sir Thomas. Only three half-crowns, gentlemen, for this beautiful specimen of the feathered tribe! Who'll seize upon this rare opportunity, and bid me another?"

"Ten shillings."

"Ten and sixpence."

"Twelve shillings."

"Twelve and sixpence."

"Twelve and sixpence. Five half-crowns, gentlemen. Going at twelve and sixpence—the finest fowl in featherdom—lays an egg and a half a day—as they say—and sometimes probably two and a half. Here are two boiled eggs laid to-day, gentlemen and ladies—rare hen—*very* rare hen—going at ——"

"Thirteen shillings."

"Going at thirteen shillings. Who'll say fifteen? Can't afford to sell an imported hen so cheap—who'll give me the fifteen ——"

"Fifteen."

"Fifteen. Many thanks, ma'am."

"Sixteen."

"Seventeen."

"Seventeen. Thank you, young sir. Seventeen shillings I am bid for this rare old imported hen—eighteen shillings, thank you, sir —eighteen and sixpence, great thanks. Who ——"

"Twenty shillings."

"Twenty shillings for this magnificent hen. Now you begin to speak up, gentlemen. One pound I am bid for the best imported hen to be found on the ground Going—going at twenty shillings—who'll give me the twenty-five?—going for the good of its country, a fine old white-feathered domestic bird, the pride of the poultry-yard; staid and well-mannered—worth dozens of your wild young trash—going—going ——"

"Twenty-five."

"Twenty-five shillings I am bid—twenty-five. Why, gentlemen, are you going to look on and see this splendid specimen of live stock thrown away?—absolutely thrown away? Going at twenty-five shillings! Make another bid, gentlemen! Think of those poor sick afflicted soldiers and what not, perhaps this very day lying mangled and bleeding before St. Petersburg or ——"

"Twenty-six."

"Twenty-six; thanks—going at twenty-six. This fine, rare, im-port-ed hen going at ——"

"Twenty-seven."

"The gentleman bids twenty-seven. A thousand thanks. Going for twenty-seven shillings. Will nobody bid more?"

No response.

"Going—going—gone! Knocked down to you, Mr. Jones, at twenty-seven shillings. Sold dirt cheap. F-i-n-e im-por-ted hen! Given for the pure love of the cause," and Mr. Sanders handed down the caged bird.

"Put her up again," said Mr. Jones, returning the sum for which he was indebted.

"Yes, put her up again," shouted the laughing crowd.

Again the white imported hen was put up and sold off at a good price —but not so much as before. Again the money was paid down and again the ancient fowl was given back to be re-sold. For six or eight successive times she was struck off for a few shillings, bringing grist to the bazaar, and producing an amount of fun too great to be estimated. Fifty-six shillings in round numbers did that old white hen produce: and her purchaser was the farmer's wife who had made the first bid. Mrs. Palmerstone bore her prize off in triumph.

Some chaffing was being exchanged between the auctioneer and

his friends, when he suddenly threw himself back with a tragic air. His elevated position enabling him to see what they could not.

"Spirit of despair! What do I behold!" cried he. "That imported hen again! Can't I get rid of her! I've sold her more than a half-dozen times already."

"Put her up again! Put her up! Put her up!" shouted the mirthful crowd.

True enough. Mrs. Palmerstone was bringing back the hen. One of the ladies in the secret had incautiously disclosed to her the truth —that it was old Cartright's white hen. Saying nothing, but not liking to be laughed at, she brought back the prize and presented it for the general good.

Once more the hen was put up. The room now was in one roar of laughter. Her purchaser was a popular clergyman.

"Knocked down to you, reverend sir," cried the auctioneer; "I'm sure she ought to bring you luck. But, look here—just you stay a bit, Mr. Dawson."

The Rev. Mr. Dawson, then carrying off the cage, turned round his laughing face.

"You bought the hen, you know, sir; that beautiful im-port-ed hen; but you didn't buy the cage. We must put up that."

Mr. Dawson, taking out the hen, handed the cage to the auctioneer. The hen croaked and fluttered in the reverend gentleman's arms; the audience roared. The auctioneer held up the basket.

"A very fine cage: partaking of the nature of a hen-coop; made of the most undoubted wicker—what did you say, sir? Do for either? Yes. Look at it, gentlemen—formed in the very latest style of fashion—from right over the water—one can't but admire it. Who gives me the first bid for this splendid ——"

"One shilling."

"Thank you much, sir; one shilling. It ——"

"One and sixpence," interrupted Mr. Dawson.

"Two shillings," cried a gentleman at his elbow, bent on fun.

Here the white hen flapped her wings and made one short but desperate effort to escape from her clerical captor. "Two shillings and sixpence," shouted he, tightening his grasp upon biddy's yellow legs.

"Three shillings," cried the other voice.

"Three and sixpence," cried the clergyman.

"Four shillings."

"Four and sixpence."

"Five shillings."

"Five and sixpence," cried Mr. Dawson, getting heated. And the auctioneer knocked it down at that.

The old hen was replaced in her cage, and her purchaser was disappearing, when once more he found himself arrested by the voice of the auctioneer.

"Those eggs, sir; those two fine boiled eggs. You have purchased the hen and the cage, but not those eggs. They don't belong to the cage; they are a separate affair."

"I should have thought they belonged to the hen," laughed Mr. Dawson.

"Not at all. I'd not go the length of saying they ever did belong to her. They must be put up to auction for the good of the bazaar—and of the wounded soldiers. Now then."

Amidst much laughter the eggs were put up. Mr. Sanders held one in each hand.

"Look at them, gentlemen and ladies. This business must be gone through thoroughly, you know. Two boiled eggs—laid to-day—found in the nest of that im-por-ted hen, and supposed to have been laid by her, already boiled, since she came into this room, as they were not in the nest when she was brought here. Their being laid ready boiled is proof positive of the im-por-ted hen's unequalled patriotism. Two freshly laid boiled eggs—great curiosity—how much am I offered? Sixpence! did I hear a voice say? Did any gentleman say sixpence? Ninepence; thank you, sir. Who will give another —— Here, let's wrap the eggs in paper to keep them clean. Two beautiful fresh new eggs, laid ready boiled by that remarkable hen. One shilling, thank you, sir."

Thus the fun kept on. The eggs were knocked down at two shillings. The proud purchaser was bearing them away when he was called upon to give up the paper they were wrapped in. Mr. Sanders made it into a ball and sold that. Thus, altogether, Farmer Cartright's old white hen brought over sixty shillings to the charity.

The last heard of the imported hen was, that the parson's wife found her a very useless and quarrelsome old thing. It was suggested that the remarkable fowl should be returned to the yard of her original donor, that he might lose nothing by his patriotic gift; together with the sincere thanks of the ladies of the committee for the material aid the white hen had brought. I have only to add that this story is no flight of fancy, but an imperfect sketch of a laughable fact.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEATH-FLAG.

DARKER and darker grew the twilight of the summer night. The glow of the sunset had faded in the north-west, giving place to the colour that has been likened to opal, but still no summons arrived for Miss Pomeroy; either in the shape of carriage or servants.

At the open window of the large drawing-room of the White House, Joan sat, wondering much that no one came for her, and anxious to be gone. She had come forth to the day's visit as a matter of duty, rather than pleasure, and it had not proved agreeable to her: the instinctive dislike to Mrs. Wylde and her daughter had made itself rather obtrusively felt; for, shocked and angry though Joan herself was at the matter connected with the keeper's daughter, she did not like or approve of the contemptuous tone assumed by Mrs. Wylde. Condemnation may be given without scorn. Altogether her day's pleasure had been utterly spoilt, though Joan suffered not that fact to appear. Silent and preoccupied, her entertainers had thought her, and extremely absurd in regard to that Sybilla Gaunt.

"Ten o'clock!" exclaimed Joan, starting up as the hour struck out from the gilt clock on the mantelpiece. "*Indeed* I must go. You will allow one of your servants to see me home, Mrs. Wylde."

"Only ten, my dear; *only* ten o'clock. It is very early yet."

"I cannot *imagine* why I have not been sent for."

"But I can, my dear Miss Pomeroy. The lord has a gentleman's dinner party this evening, as you know: rely upon it, your

brother Guy intends to come for you himself: he only waits to get rid of his guests, and be at liberty."

So spoke, so thought Mrs. Wylde. She knew nothing of the dismissal given to Guy Pomeroy by her daughter the day before. Alice was silent and spiritless: she could not this evening steal out to meet Rupert.

So Joan, at the entreaty of Mrs. Wylde, consented to sit yet a little longer. In truth, she thought the reason assigned by that lady was probably the correct one, and that Guy would arrive shortly.

Not a breath of air could be felt, though the windows were flung up to their utmost height; not as much as a flutter disturbed the wax lights. It was a very handsome drawing-room, all gilding and mirrors, and beautiful modern objects; quite a contrast to the staid, sombre rooms at Pomeroy.

"All nouveaux riches, like themselves," thought Joan, with scant flattery.

A loud peal was heard at the hall door. It proved to be old Jerome. He brought bad news. The ladies, in their anxiety, had him into the drawing-room to listen to it.

The Lord of Pomeroy had been taken ill at the dinner-table. But he had sat out the repast bravely; allowing nothing of his indisposition to be seen. At nine o'clock he made an apology for retiring, putting it upon the score of fatigue, leaving his eldest son to supply his place. Since then he had become rapidly worse.

"Why did not Mr. Rupert come for me?" demanded Miss Pomeroy of old Jerome. "He might know that I should naturally wish to be with papa."

"Mr. Rupert does not yet know the lord is ill, Miss Joan," was the man's answer. "He went out with the gentlemen when they left. Mr. Pomeroy was going out also, but I whispered him to stay behind—and then I told him. He is with the lord now."

"Anyway, Jerome, I ought to have been sent for at once."

"Miss Joan, I believe you were forgotten; it's as true as that I am here," added Jerome in his earnestness. "One was running for Mr. Norris, one for Father Andrew, and the house was all in confusion. Mrs. Rex suddenly thought of you, and asked if anyone had been sent to attend Miss Pomeroy home. So I came myself."

"Yes, yes, quite right," murmured Joan. And she departed with Jerome.

In passing the short and shady turning that led to the gamekeeper's lodge, Miss Pomeroy's eyes naturally turned in that direction. Just at the same moment some one came up this same turning with a fleet step: from the height and figure Joan knew it to be one of her brothers, either Guy or Rupert. It proved to be the latter.

"Why, Joan!—out on foot with the night-birds!" cried he, in his ever-gay tones.

"Yes: out with the owls and the bats," she answered. "Very polite

of you, I must say, to leave me at the White House until now! You might have come for me, Rupert."

"So I might. So I would, had I known. I should have thought you were at home ages ago."

"Were you coming from Gaunt's, Rupert?"

"Not I. I had been round to Bardel's."

Bardel was the junior keeper, under Whittaker. Joan, who had taken her brother's offered arm, paused in reflection. She much wanted to speak to Rupert of what was troubling her; yet hardly liked to. But Joan Pomeroy, straightforward to the last degree, never beat long about the bush; if she wished to say a thing, she generally said it.

"Rupert," she began, choosing her words rather lamely, "have you heard of—of—do you know of this dreadful—dreadful misfortune, which has overtaken Sybilla Gaunt?"

"Dreadful misfortune?" repeated Rupert.

"Or—perhaps I should rather say—that she has brought upon herself?"

"Why, what has she gone and done?" cried Rupert lightly. "Eaten chicken on fast day?"

"Rupert! Do you often see Sybilla?" continued Joan. "Have you seen her lately?"

"I saw her to-day."

"Well, then, does—does anything—*peculiar*—strike you in her appearance?"

"Not that I remember."

"Then, Rupert, you must be very unobservant—and—and I think you are only laughing at me."

"I'm sure I don't know what you are driving at, Joan. What is there in Sybilla's appearance to strike me? She talks of the heat."

Joan considered. Young men were naturally unobservant: perhaps Rupert was so.

"I—I am afraid Sybilla has—forgotten herself, Rupert," she resumed in a low, sad tone. "It will kill her father—and I should think herself too."

"Forgotten herself!—What on earth do you mean?"

"Well—she—she looks very sickly, and there must be a cause for it."

"Poor girl, perhaps there is! She may have gone and swallowed the copper tea-kettle."

"I knew you would only turn what I said into ridicule; you always do," cried Joan, vexed and humbled. "All I wished to ask you, Rupert, was, if you know whether any stranger has been intimate at Gaunt's of late."

"Let's see," said Rupert, making a show of putting on his considering cap. "I run in at will; the son-and-heir more charily. Father Andrew goes in; and I am not sure but that the lord goes."

"I said any *stranger*," repeated Joan emphatically.

"I have not seen one. Joan, my dear, let me give you a piece of advice—don't rub your head against a stone wall. As to Sybilla, I do not consider that it is any business of yours or of mine to pry and peer into her affairs. Gaunt is quite capable of seeing to his own daughter."

Joan, feeling very much dissatisfied with Rupert's manner, she hardly knew why, dropped the subject, and told him of their father's illness. Not that Joan felt particularly anxious herself; for the lord was subject to these sudden attacks of sickness.

"I thought he was uneasy at the dinner-table," remarked Rupert. "Jerome," he called out, turning to wait for the laggard steps of the old servant, "is it the gout again?"

"Yes, Mr. Rupert. And a bad attack I know it will be."

"So you always say, Jerome."

"Well, sir, we shall see. I fear it will be."

"It may do good, instead of harm," observed Rupert to his sister, while Jerome fell behind again. "I sincerely hope it will. The gout has been hanging about him ever since the spring. A good sharp bout now may carry it away."

"Alice Wylde will marry Guy," whispered Joan to her brother, as they were approaching the abbey gates.

Rupert whistled to a little dog that ran out of the quadrangle, not replying immediately. "You think so, do you Joan?"

"And you evidently do not, by your tone," she rejoined.

"Nay, I don't pretend to understand the business of all the world, as you do. Am not clever enough for it."

"Don't be silly, Rupert. I judge only by probabilities; what I see and hear. Mrs. Wylde was hinting at different items in her own affairs to-day; though why she should have done so before me, I cannot tell, and it rather struck me she was *talking at* Alice. Did you know that if Alice marries without her mother's consent, she forfeits her twenty-five thousand pounds?"

"Yes, if she marries before she is four-and-twenty years of age. After that, there's no restriction upon her."

"Well, I did not know it till to-day. She does forfeit it however, and Mrs. Wylde, should Alice be disobedient, can will the money away to whom she pleases. Mrs. Wylde is bent upon her marrying Guy: you can't mistake that: and no girl in her senses would forfeit so large a fortune. Therefore I judge that Alice will take Guy."

"She may not like Guy. She may prefer to wait."

"I think not. And why should she not marry Guy? What an exalted position it would be for her!"

"Next door to being up in the moon."

"Joke as you may, Rupert, I believe you will find I am right. That Alice is looking forward to it she let slip to-day. We had been talking about the abbey—it seems to be Mrs. Wylde's favourite

theme—of its vastness, its gloom, and its need of restoration. 'I shall have it so renovated that you'll not know it for the same place,' Alice suddenly cried, waking up out of a reverie, 'I shall make it the admiration of the whole county.' And when she saw us look at her, she recollected herself, blushed, and laughed. 'I mean,' she added, by way of correction or excuse, 'that I should do it were I the Lord of Pomeroy.' Rely upon it, Rupert, she means to be Lady of Pomeroy."

Rupert had resumed his whistling—to himself this time and very softly, smiling much. Joan inquired why he laughed.

"To think of the changes that must take place ere she could be Lady of Pomeroy. The deaths, for instance."

"Only papa's, Rupert. Guy will be the lord then."

"True. Yes."

Lights gleamed from several of the front casements; people seemed to be passing from room to room. Jerome, full of apprehension, felt sure the lord was worse—and said so. Rupert rebuked him.

"You are ever ready to anticipate evil, Jerome."

"Well, sir, I *fear* this illness; and that's the truth. And," he added to Rupert in his agitation, "if ever I saw coming death upon a face, I saw it this night upon my poor master's."

A few days went on, full of grief and uncertainty, as to the Lord of Pomeroy. It was feared that the gout would attack a vital part; Mr. Norris, the local surgeon, was frequently at the abbey, and Dr. Bill came once a day from Owlstone.

One morning, Joan, about to pass out of the purple room, encountered Father Andrew, who had just then quitted the sick chamber. The lord was better, and the improvement had put everyone in spirits. Joan asked him to enter, and they sat down. The renewed hope gave her leisure to reflect on other troubles: for these few past days the lord's state had absorbed all anxieties.

"Father," she said, in a low tone, "do you—do you know that—that anything is amiss with Sybilla Gaunt?"

The priest rose. A wasp had made its way in at the open casement, and he took out his red silk handkerchief to whisk it out.

"Nasty things, those wasps," he cried. "One of them gave me a rare sting last year. I had to sit for half a day with a wet blue-bag stuck upon the place."

"But—did you hear what I asked you, father? About Sybilla?"

"Eh, child? What about her?"

Joan repeated the words, putting them somewhat differently. The wasp had been driven out, but Father Andrew remained at the casement, as if to guard it.

"She seems rather poorly," he remarked, speaking with his back to Joan. "Should she not get better shortly, I should recommend her to try change of air."

Joan paused. "But surely, father, you—you know what is the matter with her?"

The priest began shaking his handkerchief out at the casement. "Don't like wasps," he repeated. And Miss Pomeroy found a sudden question creeping up in her mind: was he purposely avoiding the subject?

"We have been almost as sisters, father; I and Sybilla; and night after night as I lie down on my pillow, I think of her as she was in the old days, and am ready to weep for sorrow. If I could aid her in her trouble," added Joan, dropping her voice to a whisper, "I should like to do it. It would not be wrong, would it?"

"Certainly not: to aid the sick or afflicted is never wrong. But," he added, turning from the casement to face Joan, "I would advise you, my daughter, not to attempt it in this case. *You could not do any good.* Sybilla has entered upon a new course; and, it seems to me, that she should be left to follow it."

He said good day, and passed from the room. Just as though it were the easiest way of ending the topic, thought Joan in her surprise. But—though strictly obedient to her spiritual adviser in every essential matter, both by training and by inclination—Joan possessed her own share of the Pomeroy will; and she did not see the necessity of obedience in this. The good father no doubt wished to spare her pain—perhaps to spare her from contact with an erring woman.

And Miss Pomeroy, following out her opinion, put on her bonnet there and then, and walked down to the gamekeeper's lodge.

Sybilla, looking more sickly, more *blamable*, if that were practicable, than she had looked before, received Miss Pomeroy with less of emotion than then, and soon recovered her equanimity. Joan spoke plainly, but Sybilla would admit nothing. They sat together on the little sofa, the sweet red roses, trailing over the open casement, looking in upon them; the serene blue sky above seeming as a very type of heaven.

"We were girls together, Sybilla, though I was some years the elder; we were firm friends at the convent school," pleaded Joan. "If you, as seems to be only too apparent, have fallen into trouble, let me help you. You have neither mother nor sister: no one, as it were, to protect you; you were confiding, unsuspicious; but the world is an evil one, and carries its evil ways into many an innocent retreat. Oh, Sybilla, tell me all the truth, and let me help you!"

The scalding tears rolled slowly down Sybilla's cheeks, her beautiful deep-blue eyes were averted; but if ever a clasp of the hand expressed intense gratitude, hers did as it lay in Joan's.

"There is nothing that I can tell; nothing," she faintly said. "But thank you for your goodness, your condescension, dear Miss Pomeroy; I thank you from my very heart. I shall ever remember it."

Joan's benevolence froze a little. The tone of Sybilla's denial was unmistakably firm.

"I have come to you out of compassion, Sybilla, and against advice. No one, as you know, would be less likely to countenance wrongdoing than I; it has cost me something to offer to condone it now."

"But you are mistaken," returned Sybilla, speaking faintly again. "I have nothing to acknowledge, nothing to confess. Indeed, Miss Pomeroy, you are mistaking me."

"Does your appearance belie you?" questioned Joan, severely. "Do you deny that you are sick?"

"I am sick; that is true. Since the excessive heat came in, I have felt languid—ill."

"Why do you muffle yourself in a shawl—why do you refuse to see Mr. Norris?" abruptly asked Joan.

"In spite of the weather, I feel cold, am often shivering inwardly," replied Sybilla, shivering now as she spoke. "As to Mr. Norris, he could do me no good."

"What would our good Lady Abbess say to this? What would Sister Mildred say?"

Sybilla was silent.

"Some days ago, when your father spoke to me about your illness, I promised to tell him what I thought of you—and now I dread to meet him. If you refuse me your confidence now, Sybilla; refuse to allow me to be your friend; you refuse for good, understand. It is the last time I shall ever ask you."

"But, indeed, there is no confidence that I can give you," persisted Sybilla, still in the same faint tone, her tears dropping quickly. Bending her head, she suddenly kissed Joan's hand. The latter rose.

"This is all then, Sybilla, that is to come of my offer?"

"May Heaven bless you, dear Miss Pomeroy. Think of me—think of me as leniently as you can."

A burst of sobs had caused the break in the words. Joan, annoyed and disappointed, broke out with some slighting words.

"Our intercourse ceases from this hour, Sybilla Gaunt. I wish you well through your trouble; but from henceforth we are strangers."

She swept away with all her native dignity. Sybilla closed the door, and flew up to her chamber in an agony of sobs and tears.

Better, they had deemed the lord that morning, little thinking it was the last that would ever dawn for him. In the course of the day it became known that he was dying. Towards evening, when a kind of passive stupor had replaced the commotion which the dire news had occasioned in the household, and he was alone with his two sons, Joan, and Father Andrew, he began to speak of the earthly interests he was about to leave.

"Mind, Guy," he suddenly cried, after a rather prolonged silence, "Jerome is to have the keep. He is getting in years, and may not

care to remain in your service. You, also, with a young wife, may prefer a younger man as your household's head. He can go to the keep at once, if he pleases; I have told him so; or he may take service with you a little longer first, as he and you shall please. He has saved sufficient wages, and I have left him something more; and it is my desire that the keep shall be his to reside in, so long as he shall live. You hear me, Guy."

"Yes, father, certainly."

"Give him the keep for his home, to have exclusive control over, just as though it were his, absolutely; at his death, of course, it will be free again, and your own. Give me your promise."

"I promise, father," said Guy, rather wondering at the lord's seeming anxiety upon a matter that had virtually been settled long ago. "I promise faithfully."

"Father, I also promise," added Rupert.

Guy looked at his brother, a stern expression curling his imperfect lip at what he deemed Rupert's superfluous interference. "Why need you promise?" he asked, in a low tone. "You will never be the abbey's lord."

"In case it should lapse to me during Jerome's lifetime: that's why I spoke," returned Rupert.

At which suggested possibility Guy's lip took a still higher curl. He was likely to live as long as Rupert: perhaps longer; for he took better care of himself.

The old man died; died before the first glimmer of dawn. And Guy was the Lord of Pomeroy.

The death of a Lord of Pomeroy involved a great deal of ceremony and state. The very first thing to be done, according to the usages of the family, was to hoist the death-flag.

A large, melancholy-looking flag, with the Pomeroy escutcheon on it. It was always kept at the keep, in its appointed place. This flag, fetched at once by two of the upper servants, was hoisted half-mast high over the great entrance gates, to be kept there so long as the corpse remained above ground. The flag was white and the escutcheon black; and, altogether, as it waved about in the wind, it put spectators in mind of a skull and cross-bones.

The dead Lord of Pomeroy was conveyed to the chapel, there to lie in state until the day of interment—another of the Pomeroy customs—and to be visited by as many visitors as chose to attire themselves in decorous mourning. The younger sons, George and Leolin, were written to: only one of them, George, was able to respond to the call; and he but briefly. Captain George Pomeroy had obtained a great deal of absence lately for his own pleasure: now that he required it as a duty, it was but charily accorded him.

Captain Pomeroy arrived in the afternoon of the day previous to the funeral, considerably put out by the length of the passage from

Ireland. Had that not been contrary, he might have stayed at home somewhat longer: as it was, his stay must be confined to less than thirty hours. He was a light-hearted, good-natured young man, his face pleasant and fresh-coloured, with the fine Pomeroy features, but, in other respects, bearing little resemblance to his elder brothers, and he was much shorter and slighter than they were. George Pomeroy was liked by all classes, high and low, and he was Joan's favourite brother. The youngest of them all, Leolin, was ill and not able to come, to his own and their regret.

It was a grand show, that funeral: always made so for a Lord of Pomeroy. Priests, high in the Romish Church, came from all quarters to celebrate the mass; people of consideration flocked to it from far and near. He was buried in the family vault underneath the chapel. Guy, Lord of Pomeroy, followed first and alone as chief mourner; it was the custom of the lords to do so; Rupert and George walked after him together; and so on. Following the principal guests was John Gaunt; then came surgeons, lawyers, and others; and lastly the male servants, headed by Jerome. A grand funeral, a fine show; one to be talked of afterwards by the rustics of Abbeyland.

And so, Hugh, Lord of Pomeroy, was left in his resting-place; and Guy, his son, entered upon his reign.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE STILE.

"And, now that you have at length made up your mind to leave me, Joan, may I ask what stay you intend to make? Not as long as the last, I hope."

The speaker was the Lord of Pomeroy. Joan looked vaguely out in the distance, at the blue sky which rose behind the far-off convent chimneys, and did not answer immediately. It was a fair day towards the end of April. The sun was warm, the sky nearly cloudless; the trees and hedgerows had put on their tender green, and the birds were singing. Joan Pomeroy had come into the garden to enjoy it; and was joined by her brother. In a few days she was to depart on a visit to her sister, Mrs. Capel.

"I hardly know," she answered presently, in reply to Guy's question. "Isabel will not part with me readily."

"It will rest with you, Joan; not with Isabel."

"True. But you know what she wanted, Guy?"

"I know that when your father died, she wrote us an absurd proposal that you should make your home with her in future."

"Why do you call it absurd?"

"It was absurd. This is your home. It is right that it should be. And I am your protector."

"You will not miss me, Guy."

"Not miss you! Merci bien, mademoiselle."

"I mean if you marry. Your wife, your children will be all in all to you, as they ought to be. You will not miss me."

"And if I do not marry?"

"In that case, I should always regard the abbey as my general home: though I should of course sometimes stay with Isabel. But you will be marrying, will you not, Guy?" she added rather anxiously.

Guy Pomeroy, who had taken up his sister's black parasol, which she had not raised, gently flicked the bed of rhododendrons with it, in passing. His face was not less pale than of yore, but somewhat of its former sternness seemed lately to have softened down.

"It does seem rather strange to me, Guy, if I may be allowed for once to allude to the subject," she resumed, "that you do not speak to Alice. For a long, long while past I have thought you would; I thought so, even before poor papa died."

Joan Pomeroy was ignorant, you perceive, of the offer made to Alice Wylde some months ago by the Heir of Pomeroy—and her rejection of him. Guy was not likely to disclose that. Joan believed that his whole heart lay with the girl; that his every hope was bound up in her.

"You will marry her, will you not, Guy?"

"Possibly."

"Well, then, don't you see, Guy, that you won't want me? No, nor miss me—with Alice installed here as your wife."

"Miss you I always shall, Joan. And I desire—mark me—I desire and exact that this shall ever be regarded as your true home. Unless you marry."

"I shall not marry, Guy. Yes, I know what you would say—that I am still somewhat young to say that at twenty-nine; but a conviction, that I shall not, lies within me. I do assure you that I have no wish to marry; I never have had any, and I believe my best happiness will lie in a single life. Perhaps," she added, half laughing, "you and Isabel may come to some compromise—eight months in the year with her, four with you. Of course, the abbey does seem like my real home, and I daresay always will in my own mind."

"Why eight months with her and four with me?" demanded Guy. "Do you call that an equable compromise?"

"Isabel is my own sister, Guy. Alice will be but my half one. Though I daresay we shall be the best of friends. Besides ——"

"Besides what?" he questioned, for poor Joan had stopped.

"Do you know, Guy, I shall be *glad* to get away from here," she added, in a low and unwilling tone. "For a time, at least. The place is not the same to me since the—the disappearance of Sybilla."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Guy, sharply.

"Ah, but I was very fond of her; I was indeed, Guy. She was a grand, noble girl, one that I surely thought was in fair training for heaven. And when—when she fell from all that was good, it had more effect upon me than the world saw."

The Lord of Pomeroy's brows had gathered into a dark frown. It was evident that condemnation of somebody or something, probably of Sybilla herself, was just then making itself heard strongly within him; that the subject was altogether distasteful. He vouchsafed no remark.

"Have you any idea where she is, Guy? Do you think her father knows?"

"The less *you* think about it the better," retorted Guy, severely. "What have we to do with the miserable business?"

"Guy,"—in the softest whisper—"do you think she is with Rupert?"

Guy Pomeroy turned his dark face upon his sister, surprise in the sharp movement. Hers was bent on the tulip-bed.

"What can possibly induce you to ask that?"

"I—gathered the notion that it might be so, Guy—though I hardly know how," she faltered. "Rupert went away about the same time that she did ——"

"Rupert came back," was the sharp interruption.

"I know he did, for a time. One day Bridget said something in a laughing way, coupling their names together. I checked her at once."

"As I must check you," retorted Guy, in his haughtiest tone. "Put these fancies altogether from your mind, Joan; I command it. Forget Sybilla Gaunt: never allow the subject to recur to you again."

He strode off towards the gardeners, working at a distance, his tall, fine form raised to its utmost height—and there never existed a finer form than that of Guy Pomeroy. Joan left the garden, her head raised as proudly as his own. Miss Pomeroy very much disliked being put down: no one but Guy ever attempted to do it: and she was just a wee bit vexed with herself for having spoken at all.

But few changes had taken place since the death of the old Lord of Pomeroy. Guy reigned in his stead, and that was about the chief difference. All the retainers, numerous though they were, had been kept on by Guy; even old Jerome preferred active service to rest, and the keep for the present remained untenanted.

Some six weeks after the death of the late lord, Sybilla Gaunt was missing. She had disappeared. It was said that Gaunt himself had driven her in a gig to the county town, whence she took the train, and went out into the wide world. But, whether there was any truth at all in this, could not be ascertained. According to another report, Sybilla had run away, abandoning her home and her father, to his terrible consternation, and left not a word behind to say whither she had gone. She did not come back; no news was heard of her; it was believed that the gamekeeper received letters from her occasionally, but they were not sent to his house. He performed his

duties as usual, just as if no trouble had fallen upon him. No one dared to speak to him of his loss. Gaunt was not a man to be questioned: he could put down impertinence, whether from rich or poor, with as high a hand as the old lord had done in his haughtiest days. How it was, or where Sybilla was, nobody knew.

Once only Joan had spoken to Gaunt of Sybilla. It was about a month back. In passing his lodge she had halted to admire the spring flowers, so abundant and kept in such nice order, not perceiving that Gaunt himself was stooping down near the gate. He rose up and they stood face to face, Joan beginning to speak lightly of the blossoming beds, just as though nothing else could be in either of their thoughts. But there was a sadness in the man's beautiful features, in his fine deep violet eyes, that aroused all Joan's sympathy, and involuntarily she put a question to him, lowering her voice.

"Have you heard of Sybilla? Is she well?"

"She is quite well. Thank you truly, Miss Pomeroy, for inquiring."

There was a strange earnestness in the man's manner as he spoke his thanks; there was not a look or tone that could be construed into the smallest iota of shame or confusion; never had he given a more self-possessed, fearless answer than that. Joan said good morning. She admired the man's Spartan courage—that would not let it be seen he felt the disgrace which had come home to him. And, literally and truly, that was all that had been heard of Sybilla.

Miss Pomeroy had her fortune, and could live where she liked. Not a large fortune, it is true, but considerably more than fell to the share of the three younger brothers, for the old lord had chosen to leave it so. If she made her residence at the abbey, this fortune need not be touched, except for her dress and such like personal expenses: Guy would have scorned to take money from his sister. If she remained with Mrs. Capel, Joan would undoubtedly contribute her share of the housekeeping, for the Capels were poor.

The small fortune inherited by the younger sons was paid over to them a very few weeks after their father's death. Rupert, who had only waited for it, being short of funds, betook himself at once to London, ostensibly to look after a government appointment that he had received the promise of. Guy graciously intimated to his brother that he was welcome to make the abbey his home until the appointment should be given; but Rupert thought he had better be on the spot "to look the people up:" at least, that was the idea given. Guy suspected—nay, he knew—that Rupert might have confessed to a more weighty motive than that of "looking up" the government. He had debts, poor fellow: the few thousands inherited from his father would be nothing like enough to settle them, and it might be just as convenient that his place of residence should be one less conspicuously known than was Pomeroy Abbey. That was some months ago. Rupert had not got the appointment yet; but Guy had

reason to know he was adding to his debts, instead of paying them. Ready money, and the temptations of London! an irresistible position for Rupert the thriftless.

Another lovely spring day, still warmer than yesterday. The hedges seemed to be clothed in a more luxuriant green, the sky to be darkly blue with an earnest of coming summer; the grass, growing long, was intermixed with oxlips, cowslips, and bluebells, and the long deep-pink flowers that children call cookoos. Alice Wylde, rambling in the fields near her house, had sat down upon a low stile amidst these homely flowers, and thought pensively of the happy years of her childhood, when the greatest of her simple delights had been to go into the meadows and gather such—delights that would never return. Her straw hat shaded her face; her coloured muslin robe was pure and fresh.

She was deeply unhappy. Loving Rupert Pomeroy with all the intensity of an impassioned and not well-disciplined heart, this long absence from him had seemed like a separation of years. It was September when he went away; it was April now—nearly May. All those months, and never to see him, never to hear of him—save for a word or so dropped now and again by Miss Pomeroy or Guy. He had not written to her: there might be danger in that: neither did she know his address in London. In point of fact, there was no engagement between them—never had been; only love.

And Guy, the lord, was wooing her still; wooing her silently. She gave him no encouragement whatever; rather repelled him, tacitly. She did not dare to do it openly, and so invoke the displeasure of her mother. Joan had wondered why her brother was so dilatory in asking the young lady to be his wife, but Guy was only "biding his time." Discouraged by her manner, he preferred to work his way with her, rather than speak again too soon and provoke a second refusal. But Guy was getting impatient, tired of the delay; and—Alice Wylde is sitting on the low field stile there, looking at the flowers, with eyes that see them not.

She steps off the stile and leans against it, for she hears footsteps approaching; and, though the hedge hides the intruder, she knows them to be the Lord of Pomeroy's.

"Good morning, Alice."

"Good morning," she returned, preparing to move away.

"Stay," said Guy, putting his arm before her; "I cannot go on like this; I cannot be shunned for ever, as you are shunning me. If I come up with you out of doors, you walk away; if I call at the White House, you will not remain in the room. I have been there now, talking to your mother; and she says, and I say, that matters should be brought to an issue."

"They were so brought long ago," replied Alice. "Only you will not take my answer."

"No, I will never take that answer," returned Guy. "Oh, Alice!" he added, changing his tone to one of deep tenderness, "have compassion upon me! my love for you is eating away my heartstrings."

"I cannot love you," she replied, in a low tone.

"So you have said. I have asked you, as I ask you now, Why?"

"Love is not a thing that can be called up at will. It cannot be bought and sold; as you would barter a jewel."

"Sufficient of it will come at will; if there be no bar. I am ready to take you, and chance it. *Is* there a bar?" he continued, in a meaning tone. "Latterly I have grown to think it."

Alice Wylde hesitated. The persecution—for so she looked upon it in her spirit of opposition—of Guy Pomeroy had become intolerable to her: when she woke in the morning, the consciousness that she should meet him in the day, possibly be forced to listen to his love-making, to a second edition of his offer, would rush over her with a feeling of mingled doubt and despair. That this state of things could not continue, common-sense told her. On her side she was getting angry and vexed with Rupert: but just at this moment it seemed to her that she must get rid of Guy. What if she told him there was a bar? it might put an end to his hopes and his tormentings. So she spoke out on impulse: not weighing her words.

"If I were to impart to you that there is a bar, would it convince you that your wish to address me cannot be carried out?"

"What is the bar?"

She did not answer. A wave of something that looked like terror passed over Guy's face. His voice became strangely agitated.

"Not that of love!—of love for another? Oh, Alice, do not say it!"

"I must say it, if I am to speak the truth," she whispered. "I do love another."

Guy's face took a darker expression. "Has another dared to woo you?"

"Dared?"

"Yes—dared. For it must have been done in secret—in dishonour. Your mother knows nothing of this."

"I would ask the Lord of Pomeroy to spare me—to my mother as to himself."

"Alice, this is no child's play. I have a right to inquire into this matter, to be told the whole truth. Who is it that has dared to come between us?"

In her inmost heart Alice thought that the sentence might have been changed; that the one to "come between" was Guy himself—between her and Rupert.

"If you will not accord me an explanation, Alice, I must ask it of your mother. Oh, my dear, why won't you trust me?" he continued, in a softer tone. "Confide in me as in your best friend: you have never a warmer one."

"It is your brother," she faltered, her voice falling to a whisper.

"My brother!" repeated Guy, looking at her in amazement. "Which brother?"

"Rupert."

A minute elapsed before Guy took in the sense of the words. So unconscious had he been of any such pretension on Rupert's part that he thought even now he must have misunderstood her.

"It cannot be," he said. "Rupert?"

"Alas, yes! He is my best-beloved."

Alice had heard of the passion that on occasion Guy Pomeroy could fall into. It arose now. Bewildered, confused in his bitter disappointment, his dearest hopes struck back upon him, he hardly knew what he uttered.

"Rupert!" he foamed. "Rupert! the ill-doing spendthrift! the disgrace to the name of Pomeroy! who is now in hiding, lest his reckless debts should be visited upon him; whose light conduct here in Abbeyland would be a by-word in men's mouths, but that he is a Pomeroy! who —— But I do not believe you," suddenly broke off Guy, his passion cooling down, as he revolved the past in the light of common sense. He could not remember that Rupert and she had been sufficiently intimate for love to supervene. "It is a mistake, Alice. You never saw much of Rupert, or he of you."

Alice leaned against the top bar of the stile. She did not reply; but the rich flush of love, remembered love, mantled to her cheek and her lips parted with a half-smile. It maddened Guy.

"Do you wish to drive me wild?" he asked, scorning concealment. "Why don't you say that you never met him—to love; that you are asserting what is false, only to deceive me."

"I have said what is true. And, as to not meeting, I should be sorry to meet you in secret, as I have met Rupert."

"You—a gentlewoman—and my promised wife—can stand there and avow to me that you have met Rupert Pomeroy in secret?"

"I am not your promised wife," retorted Alice, bent on vexing the lord in her own sense of discomfort. "And there was no other way in which we could meet, for you had gained the ear of my mother. If we did meet in secret, where was the harm? do you think Rupert would let it come near me?"

"He—he made love to you?"

"Yes; he loved me. When you were paying your formal visits in the day, Rupert paid his in the evening. We used to walk about in the grove yonder—and oh, we were so happy!"

The Lord of Pomeroy turned his face from Alice, bending it on the ground: it was well, perhaps, that she did not see it then. His love for her was indeed as a volcano raging within him: he could not give her up; far rather would he have given up life and all its benefits. What could have possessed her to meet him in this spirit

of bravado? Guy was not one to bear it tamely, or to be balked of his revenge. As to Alice—she should be his, even if he died for it. And death seemed, in his present mood, to be far too good for his treacherous brother.

"Alice," he said, compelling his tone to an unnatural calmness, "your love is worse than wasted, if it be given to Rupert Pomeroy."

"Wasted?"

"Yes, he had none to waste; or to give to you."

Again the rich red flush of remembrance dyed her cheeks, and her lips were parted with the same sweet smile. Guy kept down his temper.

"I say Rupert Pomeroy had no love to give to you. He deceived you if he professed it: he was only amusing himself."

"You shall not traduce him to me," she interrupted, with spirit. "I will not listen to it. You know the motive which has obliged me to confide this to you—that you may fix your hopes elsewhere. Keep my secret, Guy, and be generous: perhaps I shall be your sister some time."

"Walk with me a little way, Alice," he suddenly exclaimed. "Not far."

Mechanically she obeyed, for his tone was imperative. Guy offered her his arm; but she bowed a refusal.

"You would take Rupert's," he said, with reproachful scorn. And then chafed in spirit for having said it.

"It is not the custom for young ladies to walk arm-in-arm in public. And I am quite alive to the exactions of custom," she added, throwing back her head.

"Custom!" retorted Guy—"between man and woman who are to form the closest tie on earth?"

"Did you speak of yourself, or of Rupert?" she returned, delightfully aggravating. And the Lord of Pomeroy, after a look that must have betrayed the bitterness of his heart, walked by her side in silence. But all this only tended to augment the turmoil, the resentment that was shaking his every fibre. If ever a man had been desperately ill-used on earth, he believed that it was himself.

The next field brought them within view of the gamekeeper's lodge. The back of it was towards them. The windows were closed, the house seemed deserted: it often looked so now Sybilla was gone. Old Nanny liked to be solitary. Guy stopped, laid his forefinger on Alice's arm, and caused her to turn towards it.

"You see that place, Alice?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"Look at it, my dear. Study it well."

"It is Gaunt's cottage," she exclaimed, wonderingly. "Why am I to look at it?"

"It might be well that you should see it. Because *there* was where Rupert's love was given."

She was slow in comprehending. No suspicion of the sort had ever dawned upon her. Guy's words only called up thoughts of the gamekeeper and the cottage: not of Sybilla. Guy, saying no more for the moment, turned back with her home. Presently he spoke.

"There are certain topics, Alice, that we may not discuss openly; custom, which you avow yourself a disciple of, does not sanction it; the proprieties of life would not sanction it: nevertheless, some of this reserve must be forgotten, even to a young lady, when circumstances imperatively compel it."

Alice Wylde turned her wondering eyes upon him.

"You know that Sybilla Gaunt has left the place," he resumed, in a low, deep tone: "you know, at least it is probable you do, why she has been obliged to leave it."

"Well?"

"She is with Rupert."

Silence ensued. Guy glanced round. Alice was walking on, but he could not see her face, her hat shaded it from him.

"The author of the disrepute that fell upon Sybilla Gaunt was Rupert Pomeroy," continued Guy: "he who ought to have guarded her from it. Rupert—I tell it you fearlessly, Alice, for it is the truth—is heartless as he is high. And so—he pretended that his whole love was yours!"

"It was—*hers?*"

"Yes, he is both base and false."

As a blast of lightning falls upon a tree, and shatters it, so were these words falling upon Alice Wylde's brain. At the end of the last field, which skirted Mrs. Wylde's garden, Guy walked forward and held the gate open for her to pass through. He could have broken again into passion, had he been sure that her emotion arose from love of Rupert: her countenance was white with agony.

"Is it true?" she gasped.

"It is true as that you and I are here, living."

CHAPTER VI.

THE LORD'S TRIUMPH.

WALKING slowly towards the open window of the dining-room, the footsteps of the Lord of Pomeroy echoing in her ears as he strode away from the garden gate, went Alice Wylde, feeling as if the best part of her life had been crushed out of her.

Remembrance was busy within her; events of the past were rising up, trifles which had caused no reflection at the time. She remembered once to have made a slighting remark to Rupert on Sybilla Gaunt, and Rupert had abruptly changed the theme. Again, she remembered, in driving home with her mother from a dinner party,

one moonlight night, at which they had met the lord and Guy, but not Rupert, who had sent an excuse, she saw Rupert standing by the trees at Gaunt's cottage; and there was another shadow near him, an undefined one: the gamekeeper's she had concluded, and she had wondered why Rupert had gone down there so late. Of course that shadow must have been Sybilla's.

How was it that she had been so blind? Who but Rupert, with his fascinating manners and his handsome form, with his careless principles and indifference to consequences, was likely to have turned the head of Sybilla? The inferior people about?—she would have spurned them under foot. Times and again she had wondered to herself with a hazy sort of indifference whom the recreant truant could be. How could she have been so innocently unsuspecting? The very fact of Sybilla's quitting the place with Rupert—or nearly at the same period—might have served to open her eyes.

The revulsion of feeling was terrible: all her love seemed to be thrown back upon herself, just as she in her turn had been flinging back Guy's: she could have wept tears of agony at the thought of how Rupert the false must have laughed at her credulity. At her, who had told him of her rejection of Guy, of her refusal to become the Lady of Pomeroy for his sake: they had made fun of the lord together, of him and his hopes. Oh, blind, blind, blind!

In her way, Alice Wylde was little less vindictive than Guy. Already she began to wonder how she could be avenged on Rupert. There was one way, if she could bring herself to take it, that would at least show Rupert she did not care for him: accept Guy.

The opening of the gate, as she stood still thinking these thoughts, caused her to turn. Guy had come back again.

"Alice," he began, "when ——"

"Say nothing to me now," she interrupted, her tone a mixture of fierceness and despair, "or I shall be visiting the hate upon you that I am beginning to feel for Rupert. If he has thus trifled with me—if he has a false heart ——"

"He has one," said Guy. "He lives but to trifle. You are not the first he has professed to love, or was Sybilla either. The village could tell you various tales."

The village could. Many a foolish escapade had been laid, right or wrong, at the door of the gay and attractive Rupert. But the village held its peace, for was he not a Pomeroy? and, amongst the simple around, it was pretty generally held that the Pomeroys, like kings, could do no wrong.

The Lord of Pomeroy spoke his farewell and departed: Alice did not answer him, but went on indoors. Not that she intended any particular discourtesy to him, but her mind was in a chaos of tumult. "To come to me with his false vows, from the company of that girl!" she muttered to herself; "to win my love; to play upon my credulity; to sport with my heart's most sacred feel-

ings; and then return to whence he came—to her! Oh, mercy! how shall I support myself?"

A little voice came whispering to her, Is it true? or is Guy deceiving you? She thought it was true; the probabilities, looking back, seemed to say that it was. But she went to her mother, who was on her dressing-room sofa, deep in the pages of a fashionable novel, and asked out a question boldly: little cared she, in her despair, for what Guy had called the proprieties of life.

"Mother, who was it that led Sybilla Gaunt into the wrong path?"

Now it happened that Mrs. Wylde was particularly alive to the proprieties at that moment; for the book before her was of the most orthodox school: filled with holy little village children and young clergymen in long (and very unbecoming) black skirts, and who had never heard of "wrong paths," much less come in contact with them. Therefore Mrs. Wylde bent a severe brow on Alice.

"Young lady! such topics are ignored in society. What are you thinking of?"

"I want to know who it was that led Sybilla Gaunt into sin," proceeded Alice, plunging deeper into the mire.

She stood before her mother with a pale face and eye of dark misery, and it brought down Mrs. Wylde from her stilts.

"Alice, what in the world is the matter? What is Sybilla Gaunt to you? It was not Guy Pomeroy; therefore ——"

"Was it Rupert?"

"Child, I say, these subjects are better let alone. What has come to you? Of course it was Rupert: everybody knows that."

"Why did not the village shun him? He was popular, he was courted up to the very hour he left it."

"The village shun a Pomeroy!" derisively retorted Mrs. Wylde. "If a Pomeroy chose to tell them they must sell their souls to him, they would only kneel and do it. That is enough, Alice; the topic is not a suitable one for you."

But now, Mrs. Wylde, in her zeal, or perhaps, it may be said, in her animus against Rupert, spoke more surely than she had grounds for. In talking one day with her own maid, a flighty, gossiping damsel named Lettice, she had introduced the subject of Sybilla and her misdoings. "Who can have been her admirer?" spoke Mrs. Wylde. "Oh, ma'am, that's not known," said the girl, "but I'd lay something it's that good-looking Mr. Rupert Pomeroy." Not another word, save this, had Mrs. Wylde heard: and yet she took upon herself to make this confident assertion to her daughter.

It chanced, this same day, that Joan Pomeroy called at the White House, with the information that she was about to leave the abbey for a season. Left alone with Alice for a moment, the latter approached her with an eager whisper.

"Miss Pomeroy, please tell me: was it known who—who ran away with Sybilla Gaunt?"

Miss Pomeroy looked surprised. She disdained to equivocate, and therefore did not reply. "Are you ill, Alice?"

"I have heard that it was your brother Rupert," resumed Alice, her eyes strained on Joan with a wild expectancy that it was not pleasant to look upon.

Joan Pomeroy bowed her head. "I do not know, myself."

"But you cannot tell me that it was not?"

"No, I cannot. I ask, Alice, if you are ill?"

"Oh, no," she answered, with a hollow laugh, "I am very well."

Meanwhile, Guy Pomeroy, smarting under the treatment accorded him by one he loved so passionately, stung to the heart at the deceit practised upon him by his brother, proceeded home with a step that had a sound of fury in it. Only that very morning application had been made to him, on behalf of Rupert, by their family solicitor in London. Rupert had been arrested upon a "judgment" that had been obtained against him, and unless the Lord of Pomeroy came forward to extricate him, he must go to the Queen's Bench prison. Guy had been wavering all the morning as to whether he should respond to this appeal or not. He had not too much cash to spare, and he quite believed that if he extricated Rupert from this mess, he would be in a similar one to-morrow; but still, Guy was not altogether unbrotherly, and he did not much care to hear of a Pomeroy being sent to prison. The matter had been filling his mind up to the hour of his visit at the White House, argument for, answering argument against: but what he had heard decided him now.

Opening his desk, he penned a sharp, brief note to the solicitor.

"Dear Mr. Hildyard,

The arrest of my brother Rupert is, no doubt, only the precursor of many other such arrests. In fact, how he has been allowed to go scot-free so long, surprises me. Nothing that you or he can say would induce me to interfere. With regard to the Queen's Bench, a sojourn within its walls may do him good. This decision, so far as I am concerned, is final.

"Pomeroy of Pomeroy."

That was the usual signature of the Lords of Pomeroy. And thus, the appeal being unfavourable, Mr. Rupert Pomeroy was escorted to prison; and, so far as appearances might be trusted, his stay there would not be a short one.

In the course of the following afternoon, the Lord of Pomeroy arrived at the White House in all the state that it much pleased the Pomeroys to observe on occasions of importance, and which was nothing uncommon then: a gilded carriage with his arms emblazoned on it (arms that were used only by the reigning lord), four prancing horses, attendant servants in their sumptuous liveries of purple velvet

and silver. Tormented nearly to madness, Guy Pomeroy had conclusively determined to put his fate to the trial without further delay, and to make his proposals in due form.

"Oh, my goodness!" cried Mrs. Wylde, running to the window upon hearing the clatter below—"Alice, it is the Lord of Pomeroy! He has come in state. What can it mean?"

Alice, looking pale enough for a ghost, for she had passed just such a restless, sleepless night as Guy, pushed her pretty hair from her face in consternation. "He might have given me another day or two," she murmured.

"Another what?" cried Mrs. Wylde.

"Another day or two for thought," sighed Alice. "I suppose he has come for—for my answer."

"Has he made you an offer?"

"He has renewed it, mamma. He made it before the old lord died."

"Oh, you crafty child! Never to tell me!"

"I refused him. I told him I would never, never have him; that he was never more to speak upon the subject. But yesterday he spoke again."

"And ——"

"The Lord of Pomeroy," interrupted Theresa, who had been sent up by the butler. "He is asking to see you, ma'am."

"To see *me?*" cried Mrs. Wylde.

"Yes, ma'am: so Cannet said."

"Very well," nodded Mrs. Wylde—and Theresa left the chamber. "Now, Alice, what am I to say to the lord?" she added, suppressed anger in her tone.

"I am sure I don't know what," sighed Alice, looking the very image of perplexed despair.

"What do you mean by that, you wayward girl. *Not know?* You can do but one thing—accept him."

"There's so much to be said on both sides the question," pleaded Alice. "I—do—not—like—him—you know; but ——"

"*I* know!" broke in Mrs. Wylde. "Don't bring my name in like that, Alice. If you don't like him, you ought to be ashamed of yourself; that's all I know. You have done your best to flirt with him; to draw him on."

"Ah no, not lately, mamma; not for a good many months now. I did—perhaps—flirt with him a little for fun once; but it must be as much as a year ago."

"You did more than flirt a little with him for fun; *you did all you could to lead him on to love you*," spoke the angry lady impressively. "And you succeeded. If ever man loved woman, the lord loves you—and your life with him will be as one long, happy day-dream. The Lady of Pomeroy!" continued she in an ecstacy of aspiration. "Mistress of Pomeroy Abbey! Why, for that position,

Alice, half the girls in the county are fighting! And it is at *your* feet. Surely you will not be so idiotic as to play with the lord any longer!"

"Yes, I know—I say there is a great deal to be said on both sides," assented Alice.

"Well, I must not keep him waiting. And, Alice, I shall accept him."

"No, don't do that," Alice replied, in quick fear. "If I accept him, I will do it myself. But I must speak to him in private first."

Guy had come to lay his formal proposals for her daughter's hand before Mrs. Wylde; and he did so. Flattered, delighted, the hopes and the doubts which had tormented her laid to rest, Mrs. Wylde received them in the most gracious, not to say gushing, manner. Alice was shy, she told him, uncertain; it was in the nature of young maidens to be so; but she was sure she cared for the lord at heart, and would doubtless accept the honour done her, and listen to his suit. The lord, upon that, requested to see Alice; and the mother retired, to send her in.

"You know, Guy," Alice answered, when he held her hands, and put the question to her almost as formally as he had put it to her mother, "that I have told you I cared for Rupert ——"

"Yes, yes," he frowningly interrupted.

"And therefore I do not—in that way—care for you, for we cannot care for two people at once; it is impossible. It was *true*—what you told me of him—about Sybilla Gaunt?"

"It was true."

"Then I shall never, never care for him again, and I will try never to think of him. From henceforth, my best endeavours shall be given to hate Rupert Pomeroy."

"And to love me," he softly whispered.

"That will come in time."

"My darling, that is all I ask. And you will be my dear wife?"

"I will: I promise. But you must please understand one thing, Guy—that but for Rupert's having played me false, I never could have married you. I mention it by way of excuse for what you may have deemed my ill conduct to you all this while. Rupert ——"

"We may drop Rupert's name now," again interrupted Guy, showing impatience at even the mention of his brother.

"Yes; and drop it for ever," acquiesced Alice. "Traitor!"

The news went forth to the world—the local world. The Lord of Pomeroy—the great man amid its great men—had chosen his helpmate; he was to espouse the daughter of Mrs. Wylde, whom he, as was shrewdly suspected, had been for some time courting. The young lady was not of distinguished descent; of no descent at all, in fact; but she had both riches and beauty.

Gaily and swiftly went on the preparations for the wedding; both Mrs. Wylde and Guy urging to a speedy day; perhaps neither of them, remembering the past, felt quite sure that Alice, in her caprice, might not waver again. Joan Pomeroy put off her visit, and consented to remain at the abbey for the ceremony. Her sister, Mrs. Capel, would come for it, and they would depart together when the gaieties were over.

The village of Abbeyland lay in a hollow. On its right, as we look towards the sea, rose the very long and gentle hill, winding and turning until it reached the forest: the White House being about midway between the forest and the abbey. Sheltered within the skirts of this dark forest was an old and lonely cottage, inhabited by an old woman named Rex—Naomi Rex.

In the days gone by, there had been a rather large colony of Rexes in Abbeyland—all of them close and staunch adherents of the Lords of Pomeroy. Some of them had been in the personal service—valets or house-stewards; and one had held the post of head gamekeeper before Gaunt. An ordinary keeper was he, receiving his wages; not, as Gaunt was, a "gentleman keeper." All the male Rexes had died out; of the women there remained three: Malvina Rex, who was the housekeeper at the abbey, and was called Mrs. Rex, though she had never been married; Naomi Rex, who was the old widow of Anthony Rex, the housekeeper's brother; and Bridget Rex, who was daughter to another deceased brother, and who lived at the abbey with her aunt. Naomi Rex, the widow, lived in the cottage in the forest, upon a small, comfortable income realized by her late husband; the late Lord of Pomeroy having accorded to her the use of the cottage for life. These Rexes knew as much about the traditions of the Pomeroys, and about themselves too, as long-retained servants in a family do get to know. The Rexes had always been respected by the villagers; treated by them with more consideration than they showed to one another, in regard to their having been confidential retainers of the lords of the soil.

It wanted about a week to the wedding, for which all kinds of great preparations were agate, when Mrs. Wylde chanced one hot morning to pass the cottage in the forest, and saw Naomi. Naomi was popularly supposed to be falling into her dotage. Like many imaginative persons, who, when they get in years, are fonder of ruminating on the past than of talking of the present, she would sit for hours on the bench outside her door in silence, her eyes fixed on the landscape that rose before her, the most conspicuous feature of which was the abbey, and her mind lost in the days that had been. It was thus that Mrs. Wylde found her. That lady, who had not felt well of late, and had moreover a horrible fear upon her that she was getting frightfully stout, was ordered by Mr. Norris to take as much walking exercise as she could; she often passed the cottage in her walks, and had made acquaintance with its tenant.

"Good morning, Naomi."

"Good morning to you, ma'am," replied Naomi, roused out of her reverie, and getting up to curtsey, with all her habitual respect, and to remain standing as long as Mrs. Wylde chose to halt at her palings. The manners then observed by the humbler classes to their betters were very different from those obtaining in these degenerate days: moreover, Naomi Rex knew that Mrs. Wylde was the mother of the future Lady of Pomeroy. It was the highest position in all the world, in poor Naomi's estimation: princes were, no doubt, great and grand; but the Pomeroys were greater.

"Would you please to condescend to walk in and rest, ma'am," asked Naomi, observing that her visitor's comely face looked hot and tired. "It's shady in my little parlour."

"I don't mind if I do," said Mrs. Wylde. "One feels the hill in this sultry weather. Stay; no; not indoors; I will sit on this bench," she added, sitting down on the same bench from which Naomi had risen. "How pleasant it is here!"

"Ay, ma'am, that it is. Just look, please, at the sweep o' landscape. The fair plain, and the bold rocks, and the sea shining yonder; with the abbey right before one's eyes, and the blessed convent standing off in the distance, like a peaceful haven!"

"It all looks peaceful to me, after that hill. But you must sit down yourself, Mrs. Rex."

"Thank you, ma'am, no," curtseyed the old lady. "I'll stand."

"Now, unless you take this very place from which I disturbed you,"—putting her hand out to the space by her side—"I shall go away again," said Mrs. Wylde, firmly. And Naomi, who knew what proper manners were, sat down at once. She was a cleanly-looking old lady, with a pale, thin face, wearing a big-bordered cap with black bows; a short dark gown, and a black-and-white print 'kerchief crossed upon her shoulders, which partially hid the small, beautiful cross, gold and blue enamel, that lay on her neck.

"I hope this day next week will be as fine as this one!" impulsively spoke Mrs. Wylde, following out her thoughts: and they were rarely absent now from the ceremony that was to be.

"The saints grant it!" acquiesced Naomi.

Mrs. Wylde, recalled to the present, laughed. "You know, then, what is to take place on that day?"

"Know!" exclaimed Naomi, in her surprise at the question. "Ma'am, could I be off knowing aught that concerns a Pomeroy? —especially so momentous an event as the marriage of the lord! trust, to my heart, the lord is marrying for his happiness: and the sweet young lady, too. I trust that it is not in *his* day the prediction is to be fulfilled."

Now, if Mrs. Wylde had just spoken upon impulse, so, most assuredly had Naomi, in saying this. All the morning long, one certain subject; *this* subject, had been haunting her mind. Aware of the

slip she had made, she was hasting to speak of something else, but Mrs. Wylde caught the word up sharply.

"Prediction! What do you mean? Prediction of what?"

"There used to be a prediction talked of in the Pomeroy family, when the late lord was young," calmly answered Naomi, silently crossing herself. "Hardly an ancient family in the land, ma'am, but has its beliefs and its forecastings."

"Doubtless," assented Mrs. Wylde, with dignity, as if to imply that she was of an ancient family herself. "What was the prediction about?"

"It was just a verse of rhyme, ma'am; four lines, maybe; though I don't call to mind, at this moment, how they run."

"And what did they predict?"

"They tell of some ill-fortune that is to fall upon the Pomeroys, after the marriage of one of the lords. But it's a marriage that must be entered into with deceit and craft—so it is not likely to fall in these days, for the Pomeroys are honourable; they disdain a lie. I remember hearing the late lord joke about it to his lady soon after their marriage, saying that it could not fall in his time, since he had not fulfilled its conditions."

"What nonsense it must be!" cried Mrs. Wylde. "Who made it up—who spoke it?"

"No one knows that, ma'am. It is some generations ago, now."

Mrs. Wylde burst into laughter. It must be confessed that she had little reverence for such superstitions, and would as soon have believed in a ghost itself as in a "prediction."

"Then I think the present lord has no cause to fear. If generation after generation has been passed over, surely his will be. The Pomeroys are very fanciful, are they not?" added Mrs. Wylde, consigning the subject to the oblivion it deserved.

"They have their opinions, ma'am, and their traditions. All old families have."

"You have seen a great deal of the Pomeroys in your time?"

"Ay, ma'am, I have. I was a Rex, ma'am, you see, and cousin to my late husband; and the Rexes have always been close servants of the Pomeroys. Old Jerome's mother, by the way, was a Rex, too, but only distantly related to us. The late lady took a good deal of notice of me."

"You had no children, I think?"

"No, ma'am, never. It sometimes falls out, I've remarked, that when man and wife are cousins they don't have any."

Mrs. Wylde nodded. "I suppose you will go to see the ceremony?"

"Doubtless, ma'am. The lord himself bade my sister-in-law, the housekeeper, invite me to the abbey for the day, and they'll send for me betimes. It's but a slip of a walk round to the chapel from thence,

and I can manage that. I'd not be off seeing the wedding for a good deal."

"What sort of a young man is the youngest son?" asked Mrs. Wylde; who never lost an opportunity of getting information about the family she so reverenced.

"Charming young men, both the younger ones," exclaimed Naomi Rex, warmly. "Not as grand in stature as the lord and Mr. Rupert, but fresh and fair-looking as a summer's day. Mr. Leolin is a bit haughty in manner like the lord; but Mr. George—Captain Pomeroy they call him now—is just a favourite with everybody. It is he that has the good heart. He takes after his mother."

"I have seen him: he was here when we first settled at the place," remarked Mrs. Wylde. "But I did not see him when he came to the funeral."

"His stay was so short, ma'am. Short as it was, though, he was up to see me between the lights—bless him! 'Naomi,' says he to me, in his pleasant way, 'this is an age for scientific discoveries; but there's one discovery that they don't make, and that is to change a gale at sea into a calm.' He was kept back two whole days by a hurricane in crossing from Ireland—as maybe you heard at the time, ma'am."

"Oh, the sea is dreadful," remarked Mrs. Wylde. "We had a three days' gale off the Cape when I was coming from India; the waves rising mountains high, and beating us back every minute. I never was so frightened in my life. And now I must go," she added, beginning to tie the strings of her grey chip bonnet, which she had untied for coolness; "but I must ask you to give me a glass of water first."

Naomi called to her little maid, Ann, and the water was brought. After drinking it, Mrs. Wylde turned to pursue her way.

"What a beautiful cross that is!" she exclaimed in admiration, her eye catching slight of it as Naomi bent forward to close the gate after her.

"It never leaves my neck, ma'am, night or day, save when I want to renew the ribbon; I look upon it as a charm," spoke the old woman.

"Some relic, I suppose?"

"A relic of the Pomeroys, ma'am. My late lady gave it to me after Master Leolin was born. Her maid was ill at the time, and the nurse was taken ill; a sort of epidemic, I suppose it was, and they sent for me. My lady liked me to be about her; and though the two young women soon got well, she kept me for six weeks, and gave me this cross when I left. Oh, she was a good, considerate, sweet-tempered lady—and Master George is the very model of her. Good day, ma'am; my service to you."

Mrs. Wylde walked slowly home, her thoughts running in a desultory kind of way upon the interview. A lovely cross, she said to

herself; quite out of place upon that old woman's wrinkled neck; it was perfectly absurd to give it to her. If Captain George were as indiscriminate as his mother in such matters, she should not say much for his sense. And what autocrats the Pomeroys seemed to have been always!—and how proud this old creature was of having served them! Thus Mrs. Wylde's reflections ran on, from one point to another—but never once did they recur to the "Prediction."

The days sped quickly onward, and the eve of the wedding arrived. Visitors, in the shape of Mr. and Mrs. Capel, came to the abbey; one or two to the White House: but the guests would chiefly assemble on the day only.

In the afternoon Alice sat in her own room, her maid Theresa busy packing. Just a small trunk of clothes would be conveyed to the abbey that evening; the rest would follow later. The Lords of Pomeroy disdained to follow the world's ordinary forms and customs, and Alice would on the morrow proceed direct to her new home.

Alice Wylde had borne up bravely. She would not allow herself to recal the past; she thought she was successfully putting the recreant Rupert from her heart; and she did her best to *like* the Lord of Pomeroy, to look forward to a happy life with him. Only, now and again some slight incident would arise that served to bring back to memory a scene of happier days, and her whole frame would thrill with anguish. One occurred now.

"Are these flowers to go in, Miss Alice?"

"Flowers?" repeated Alice, listlessly. "What flowers? How you do worry, Theresa!"

"These, miss, that were between this tissue paper in your little drawer," replied Theresa. "Here's a rose, and a—what is it?—a white geranium, I think, Miss Alice, but they are dried up beyond knowing."

Alice turned her head to see the flowers—she had overlooked them when casting away others—and the tide of memory came rushing over her. They were the last *he* had ever given her, and too well she remembered *how* they were given; his words and his looks of love. She buried her face in her hands, and gave vent to a groan of pain.

It was all over now; he was false, and gone. Gone, never to return. The last evening they had clandestinely met, Rupert was late; when he came he had these flowers in his hand, a blush-pink rose and a white geranium, and he put them into hers. All that sweet romance was over; henceforth her heart must content itself with the most prosaic reality.

"Flowers!" she cried, indifferently, turning to Theresa, who was on her knees before the trunk. "Some old dried things, I suppose, that have lain there and been forgotten. Throw them down with the other rubbish, Theresa."

Theresa let the flowers fall upon the carpet amidst the odds and ends of discarded things lying there. She was resuming her packing again, when her ear caught the sound of footsteps through the open window, and she stretched up her head to look below.

"Miss Alice, here's the Lord of Pomeroy."

He had come, had he!—in spite of Mrs. Wylde's having laughingly told him that according to the rules of etiquette, a bridegroom must not see his bride on the eve of his wedding-day. It was not "etiquette" that could keep Guy Pomeroy from her he loved.

Alice knew she must go to him. And why should she not? was he not to be her husband ere many hours had passed? But the current of her thoughts had been turned to the events which she had latterly striven to bury, and, as she went down, an impulse arose—long afterwards she used to wonder why it should so have arisen—to speak of them to Guy. Have we not all been unaccountably swayed by such, without rhyme or reason?

Entering the room where he stood alone, waiting for her, she stopped his words of greeting and put away unconsciously his hand. It was just as though some instinct compelled her to speak and as if she had not a minute left to do it in.

"Guy, did you deceive me when you told me that—that ill of Rupert?"

The Lord of Pomeroy turned his eyes upon her. "Why do you ask that now?"

"Were I to find, later, that you had deceived me, it would be bad for us both; for you and for me," she dreamily said.

"Deceived you in what respect?"

"About Sybilla Gaunt."

"The Lords of Pomeroy disdain deceit," was his reply. "The fact of Rupert's remaining away so long might convince you that he is with *her*, or with some other equally potent attraction, without any further proof."

"True, true," she murmured. "Forgive me, Guy."

Guy Pomeroy bent towards her, and would have sealed his forgiveness, but was met by a gesture of repression. "Don't please," she faintly said, as she drew away.

A passing scowl contracted Guy's face. When these little episodes peeped out, showing how utterly she disliked him, he felt at war with her, with Rupert, with the world, and with Heaven.

(To be continued.)

SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY.

By Miss E. H. HUDSON, Author of "Louisa, Queen of Prussia." *

MODERN historians tell us that the old stories relating to the foundation of Ancient Rome are a tissue of fables. Well, after all, a good fable is not a bad thing, and there is something about it agreeable, and really suitable to the infantine period of both national and individual life. The earliest poems and traditions of every race of men had no doubt more meaning tending to good or to evil than we, in our very different social condition, can understand.

As to Rome as she now is, the following description, written by a very intelligent traveller, clearly answers the inquiry as to what the renowned city is built upon. "Papal Rome" he says "has risen from the ashes and invested itself with the pomp of the Gentile city. It is vain to look for any features of Pagan or of Christian Rome separately, they are so strangely blended and incorporated together. Christian churches are erected on the foundations, and constructed with the materials, of heathen temples. The statues of the apostles are supported by the columns of the emperors; the remains of the puteoli, designed for the reception of the vilest slaves, are lost in the labyrinths of the catacombs, now honoured as the sepulchre of the primitive martyrs."

In like manner the festivals and games which in pagan times had been annually observed were allowed to continue; or, if discontinued, were revived to please the people, slightly modified, and dedicated anew, not to a heathen deity, but to a Christian saint. But let it never be forgotten, that this was not done in the earliest and purest ages of the Church. Of course, in the best of times, a very hard struggle was going on between paganism and Christianity, and many a noble soldier of Christ fell in the thick of the fight. We read the names of glorious martyrs, but there were many more whose names are written only in the "Book of Life." Canonization was not thought of in those early days. The earliest martyrs were canonized long after their death. That the apostles used the word Saint in a very general way is evident. They used it simply to describe a person who, in that still heathen world, was professing Christianity, and living in accordance with his profession. After the apostolic age the title of Saint was given by courtesy to those who distinguished themselves by studying the history and doctrines of the Church. As we call judges and barristers learned men, so they called theologians saints, but there was as yet no such thing as canonization. Certainly Valentine had never heard of it; no idea connected with it could ever have crossed his mind. The very little we can know about him

* "Louisa, Queen of Prussia." By E. H. HUDSON. Third Edition. HATCHARD and Co., Piccadilly.

bears a striking resemblance to what we read respecting our own justly venerated proto-martyr—the brave and generous Alban, the leader of Britain's noble army of martyrs. Both Valentine and Alban suffered, not for any crime that could be alleged against them by their enemies, but only for having sheltered and helped others. The former was beaten with clubs and beheaded near Rome on the 14th of February, A.D. 270; the latter was scourged and beheaded on June 17th, A.D. 303, on the hill marked by the Abbey Church, now the Cathedral that bears his name.

Pope Julius built a church and dedicated it to St. Valentine, and for a long time the city gate near that church was called Porta Valentini; it is now Porta del Popolo. Why the name of St. Valentine was, after his canonization, connected with the customs that marked a day in the month of February, is a question that has puzzled the learned, and has not been satisfactorily settled. Some think it is because he was a genial-hearted man, and his death day, on which he gained the crown of immortality, happened to fall when all nature is ready to spring into new life; but this is mere surmise. The customs peculiar to St. Valentine's Day can be very clearly traced back into pagan times.

Every person well read in Roman history is acquainted with the *Saturnalia* and the *Lupercala*. The former was the slave's annual holiday. On that one day in the year a slave was allowed to say just what he liked to his master. Now and then a slave made a noble use of this privilege, but most of them were too degraded to be fit to enjoy a day of freedom. There were good masters who had loving, faithful slaves: to such it must have been a happy day, on which grateful words were spoken. There is at least analogy between the Saturnalia and Valentine's Day. In days of yore a Valentine professed to be his lady's slave, delighting in the happy bondage, and on that one day he was permitted to express his feelings in the most extravagant words. Such compliments could be made but once a year.

The *Lupercala* is more decidedly considered the germ from which St. Valentine's Day has sprung, because that festival was held in the month of February, in honour of Pan and Juno. The chief excitement of the day was caused by a kind of lottery: the names of young women were drawn out of a box by young men, and this was permitted to constitute some degree of temporary relationship between them, which would last throughout one year. The custom may, in its beginning, have been innocent, but as time went on the Lupercala tended to evil rather than to good. The consequent demoralization must have grieved and disgusted the right-minded youths and maidens, the noble matrons and the exemplary fathers of the brave days of old.

In heathen times there were undoubtedly men and women, young and old, who by their personal characters, by their efforts in the

right direction, and by their groping and feeling after something beyond this life, were very far superior to the days in which they lived. And what, ere this, would the world have become, if we could not say as much for every generation that has flourished and fallen, like the leaves of the forest, through the eighteen Christian centuries?

Pagan customs could not all be quickly swept away by the introduction of Christianity, nor even by imperial power, after Constantine's conversion. Certainly the mere name of St. Valentine would not hallow anything that was in accordance with the tastes, and likely to commend itself to the approbation, of Pan and Juno. An inquiry into the different kinds of human pride deified under the names of that popular god, who, though one with wise Osiris, one with mighty Jupiter, could condescend to be also one with Bacchus, and that vain goddess, furiously jealous and most exacting, might not be uninteresting, but we must leave our readers to pursue it for themselves.

Many zealous pastors of the Christian Church, who earnestly desired to improve the manners of the people, tried to put a stop to the dangerous licence and foolish superstitions that disgraced most of the national holidays, and which rendered the 14th of February like anything but a Saint's Day.

Pre-eminent among these undaunted reformers stands St. Francis de Sales, who lived from the year 1567 to 1622. When he was taking his last farewell of some dear friends, in a nunnery over which he had watched, one of the nuns handed a pen, asking him to write down what he wished them especially to cultivate: he wrote the one word, *Humility*. And is not that the one sign that distinguishes the Gospel from every other religion that has been propagated on earth? Ever since the angel sent the shepherds to the manger, has it not been the one effectual sign that souls have been awakened and guided to the Saviour? But Francis de Sales used to say "Humility and Charity are virtues that will not bear being spoken of, lest their bloom should be rubbed off." Although by his own wish he had entered on monastic life at an early age, yet his observant eyes were always on the world. "One does not," said he, "give oneself to the Church with a view to gain a position for oneself, but in order to till that piece of ground allotted to one by the Householder." He worked hard among all classes of people, especially among the lower orders, and being shocked by the improprieties permitted on Valentine's Day, he combated them by substituting a new institution. He severely censured the custom of letting boys draw the names of girls, to be admired and attended on by them, and to abolish this he invented another kind of lottery. On the tickets were inscribed the names of certain saints, and their praiseworthy characteristics. In many religious houses on the continent this reformed custom is still observed on the 14th of February. Each

member of the community keeps the paper he or she has drawn on that day, through the year, that it may remind its owner of the saint, and of the virtues set forth for imitation.

No attempt to connect the customs of Valentine's Day with religion appears ever to have been made in England. This is not to be regretted, and perhaps it is the reason why the sweethearts' holiday, which has become obsolete in other countries, has not died out here. On the contrary, it is now looked upon by foreigners as a custom exclusively English.

A French traveller thus describes what he saw in England :—

"St. Valentine's Day is the carnival of the young folks here. English girls await the postman's arrival with the utmost impatience. In a state of delightful excitement they open their letters, and instantly give vent to their feelings in cries of rapture or in bursts of laughter. The girl who receives no valentine has reason to feel mortified, as it is a proof que personne ne songe à l'empêcher de coiffer Sainte Cathérine."

So says the Frenchman. It does not seem to have occurred to him that those who receive their valentines most quietly, may be in the greatest danger.

"There is many a true word spoken in jest," and though the words of the proverb may not come into mind, yet the truth it expresses sends a thrill of hope through many a young heart. Let them hope so long as hope is more mirthful than deep, but let them beware not to make one of those pretty valentines the foundation-stone of an aerial castle, for

> "Hearts are broken, heads are turned,
> By castles in the air."

Few people have completely outlived every natural tendency to superstition. At the beginning of life we are all superstitious, or something like it, for in this world the little child is surrounded by wonders that he cannot understand. Before he has lived long enough to have any fixed ideas as to what he may reasonably expect to see, to hear, and to be warned or guided by, his fancies, his fears, and his anticipations must be tinged with what older people call superstition. Some minds, and these are not necessarily the weakest, cling longer and more firmly than do less imaginative ones to such primeval notions. Their ideas still happily pursue the old paths through the flowery wilderness, still ramble along such tracks of thought as those which, once upon a time, led to a kind of belief that the valentine you had drawn was especially likely to be your husband or wife, or that the first person of the other sex whom you met on the morning of the 14th of February was hereafter to be united to you in wedlock, according to some mysterious law of destiny.

Passing lightly over surrounding romance, we will follow the slender thread of history we are tracing out.

In the days of Merrie England, before railroads, and telegraphs,

and telephones, and school-boards were dreamt of, even by Dame Ursula Shipton, there could be but very few written valentines, for the simple reason that most of our youths and maidens could neither read nor write. In those merrie days the lottery already mentioned was the charming amusement on the 14th of February. Having in the course of years attained the highest point of popularity, it became doubly delightful, as appears from the following description:—

"An equal number of maids and bachelors get together; each writes his or her true name, or a feigned name, upon a separate billet—then these billets are mixed together, and drawn for by way of lots: the maids taking the men's billets, and the men the maids'. So that each of the young men lights upon a girl, that he calls his valentine, and each of the girls on a young man, whom she calls hers. By this means each has two valentines; but the man sticks faster to the valentine that has fallen by lot to him, than to the valentine to whom he has fallen. Fortune having divided the company into so many couples, the valentines give balls and treats to their mistresses, wear their billets on their sleeves or bosoms, as badges of honour, and this little sport often ends in love."

The first written valentine of which we hear, was penned by a noble captive, the Duke of Orleans, who could not draw for his valentine because he had been taken prisoner at the battle of Agincourt. The quaint sentimentality of this effusion accords with the taste of the age of chivalry.

In the works of Chaucer, of Shakespeare, and his contemporary, Michael Drayton, also a native of Warwickshire, and in the poems of John Donne, whom Dr. Johnson calls the founder of the metaphysical school of poetry, we find proof that St. Valentine's Day was never forgotten by our ancestors. But the most entertaining allusions to it are to be found in the Diary of Mr. Samuel Pepys, the fullest record we have of his times. He was Secretary to the Admiralty when Charles II. and James II. reigned, and he lived to see Queen Anne upon the throne. All the propriety of that age seems to have centred itself on the 14th of February, which really was not fair to all the other days of the year. In different years Mr. Pepys notes in his Diary that he had happened to draw his wife; once, he tells us, that Mistress Pepys had drawn a nice little boy, who brought her a pretty gift of his own making. It was then the fashion for gentlemen to make presents to their valentines. Mr. Pepys' entry, on February 14, 1667, unconsciously, and very ingenuously, illustrates his own character as well as that of his times:—"I am this year my wife's valentine, and it will cost me £5; but that I must have laid out if we had not been valentines."

Another author, who wrote more than half a century later, assures us that ridiculous letters were then unknown, and if letters of any kind were sent, they contained only courteous expressions of attachment from some youth to some young maiden, honeyed with a few

respectful compliments. This writer evidently feels that the golden age he is describing is passing away. It was succeeded by a period of decadence. Valentine's Day became a much degraded festival, chiefly observed by those who could enjoy the sending of jocular anonymous letters, intended to quiz and annoy the parties to whom they were addressed. At the same time ugly pictures began to appear, ridiculous coloured caricatures of the male or female figure, with a few burlesque verses below; some of a more sentimental kind gave views of Hymen's altar, of fluttering cupids, or of hearts transfixed with darts.

Such low wit as this could circulate freely among only the lower orders, and to them it became chiefly confined. The children of the higher classes were not willing to lose their merry-making, and for their sakes a few prettier pictures and verses were produced; but the old custom, having fallen into disrepute, was sinking lower and lower, when it was arrested by a powerful upward movement, "The world compelling plan," which embraced all things great and small: for nothing could seem insignificant to him who set up above our heads this inscription—

"The progress of the human race, resulting from the common labour of all men, ought to be the final object of the exertions of each individual. In promoting this end we are accomplishing the will of God."

Since the glorious May day of A.D. 1851, on which Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort inaugurated the first International Exhibition, art in all its various branches has rapidly progressed. A great many things are much more beautiful than they ever were before, and this certainly is the case with valentines. The flower paintings are in good taste, and quite artistic. The painted cupid admirably represents some of the lovers of this unchivalrous age, for he is always taking aim, and there it ends. Many are perfumed to a degree that puts the violet to shame, and should make a white rose blush. In sober truth, the improvement, as tending to elevate the public taste, is laudable. It is whispered that we owe it to a number of ladies, who, aided by the highest ladies in the land, have opened for themselves this new and pleasant field of labour, on which the harvest is reaped from Christmas till Easter. It is *work*, though it looks so light and easy; but even the designer's part can be done only by dint of industry, care, and patience, and in these days it is done under the pressure of hard times. From the original paintings lithographs are taken, and thus they are multiplied in extraordinary numbers. £18,000 worth of the pretty trifles have been sold in six months by one wholesale house. We wish the skilful artists every success. The little missives so plentifully produced, cause the labour, the laugh, and a little light-hearted love, not at all confined to sweethearts now, among the young ones. And many a one who has lived to see a long succession of Valentine's Days is quite ready to join in the merriment, though sometimes it must be

with the laughter that covers a sigh. Yet even to them, with the return of the mirthful season,

> "Like the odour of brine from the ocean
> Come the thoughts of other years."

A reviving odour it is, more invigorating than that emitted by aromatic spice, or sweetest flower, or even by the myrtle plant, fit emblem of Love, because its crushed and broken ever-green leaves are more fragrant than its fragile blossom.

Though, having outlived, or being separated from, relations and friends, the man or woman be a lonely one, yet the heart within may be in itself a little home very comfortably furnished, and memory gives companionship. Across the table—for the spirit still needs its food, and God provides—a flickering glow is shed, that glances even into the darkest corner, when

> "The summer's ruin cheers the winter's hearth."

With such a warm prospect before us, let us gather up our gleanings from dead branches, and go on our homeward way rejoicing. What though our burden sometimes seems a little heavy, and life's autumnal afternoon cold and dreary?

Young readers may think we have rambled far away from St. Valentine's Day. Not so far perhaps as they fancy, for we are very near the end of the subject—the conclusion at which all thoughtful persons must arrive, if they read the real stories connected with that day. Taking a birth, a marriage, and a death that occurred on the 14th of February, they are remarkable, because the characters, the circumstances under which they developed, the extraordinary vicissitudes they experienced, render them curiously well suited to be twined together into a commemorative wreath.* Those stories of real life show us "Young Love" as he is depicted by artists of old schools, with a beautiful rose he plays with and throws away; but this one did not wither and prematurely die. They show us a crown and sceptre, not so much as the insignia of regal power, but rather as a striking illustration to warn us against trusting in the delusions of ambition. They show us a noble-minded man, whose life-blood was shed on his path of duty, one who deserves to be honoured and imitated as much as does Saint Valentine.

* The birth of Lady Sarah Lennox, February 14th, 1744. The marriage of Elizabeth, daughter of James I. of England, to Frederick, 5th Count Palatine of the Rhine, afterwards King of Bohemia, on February 14th, 1614. The death of Captain Cook, February 14th, 1779.

CHARLOTTE AND CHARLOTTE.

PEOPLE are apt to say, when telling of a surprise, that the touch of a feather would have made them fall. I nearly fell without the feather and without the touch. To see a dead woman standing straight up before me, and to hear her say "How are you, and is the Squire at home?" might have upset the balance of a giant.

But I could not mistake. There, waiting at the front door to come in, her face within an inch of mine, was Nash Caromel's first wife, Charlotte Tinkle; who for two years now had been looked upon as dead, and buried over in California.

"Is Mr. Todhetley at home?" she repeated. "And can I see him?"

"Yes," I answered, coming partially out of my daze. "Do you mind staying here just a minute, while I tell him?"

For, to hand in a dead woman, might take him aback, as it had taken me. The Pater stood bolt upright, waiting for Mrs. Scott (as he had supposed it to be) to enter.

"It is not Mrs. Scott," I whispered, shutting the door and going close up to him to speak. "It—it is some one else. I hardly like to tell you, sir; she may give you a fright."

"Why, what does the lad mean?—what are you making a mystery of now, Johnny?" cried he, staring at me. "Give me a fright! I should like to see any woman give me that. Is it Mrs. Scott, or is it not?"

"It is some one we thought was dead, sir."

"Now, Johnny, don't be a muff. Somebody you thought was dead! What on earth's come to you, lad? Speak out."

"It is Nash Caromel's first wife, sir: Charlotte Tinkle."

The Pater gazed at me like a man bereft of reason. I don't believe he knew whether he stood on his head or his heels. "Charlotte Tinkle!" he exclaimed, backing against the curtain. "What, come to life, Johnny?"

"Yes, sir, and she wants to see you. Perhaps she has never been dead."

"Bless my heart and mind! Bring her in."

The first thing Charlotte the First did when she came in and the Squire clasped her by her two hands, was to burst into a fit of sobs. Some wine stood on the sideboard; the Squire poured her out a glass, and she untied the strings of her bonnet as she sat down.

"If I might take it off for a minute," she said. "I have had it on all the way from Liverpool."

"Do so, my dear. Goodness me! I think I must be in a dream. And so you are not dead!"

"Yes, I knew it was what you must have been all thinking," she answered, stifling her sobs. "Poor Nash!——what a dreadful thing it is! I cannot imagine how the misconception can have arisen."

"What misconception?" asked the Pater, whose wits, once gone a wool-gathering, rarely came back in a hurry.

"That I had died."

"Why, that friend of yours with whom you were staying—Bunn—Munn—which was it, Johnny?—wrote to tell your husband so."

Mrs. Nash Caromel, sitting there in the twilight, her brown hair as smooth as ever and her eyes as meek, looked at the Squire in surprise.

"Oh no, that could not have been; Mr. Munn would not be likely to write anything of the sort. Impossible."

"But, my dear lady, I read the letter. Your husband brought it to me as soon as it reached him. You remained at San Francisco very ill after Nash's departure, and you got no better, and died at last of low fever."

She shook her head. "I was very poorly indeed when Nash left, but I got better shortly. I had no low fever, and I certainly did not die."

"Then why did Munn write it?"

"He did not write it. He could not have written it. I am quite certain of that. He and his wife are my very good and dear friends, and most estimable people."

"The letter certainly came to your husband," persisted the Squire. "I read it with my own eyes. It was dated San Francisco, and signed Francis Munn."

"Then it was a forgery. But why anyone should have written it, or troubled themselves about me and my husband at all, I cannot imagine."

"And then, Nash—Nash—good gracious, what a complication!" cried the Squire, breaking off what he had meant to say, as the thought of Charlotte Nave crossed his mind.

"I know," she quietly put in; "Nash has married again."

It was a complication, and no mistake, all things considered. The Pater rubbed up his hair and deliberated, and then bethought himself that it might be as well to keep the servants out of the room. So I went to tell old Thomas that the master was particularly engaged with a friend, and no one was to come in unless rung for. Then I ran upstairs to whisper the news to the mother—and it pretty nearly sent her into a fit of hysterics.

Charlotte Caromel was entering on her history to the Squire when I got back. "Yes," she said, "we went to California, having found little luck in America. Nash made one or two ventures there also, but nothing seemed to succeed; not as well even as it did in America, and he resolved to go back there, and try at something or

other again. He sailed for New York, leaving me in San Francisco with Francis Munn and his wife; for I had been ill, and was not strong enough for the tedious voyage. The Munns kept a dry-goods store at San Francisco, and ——"

"A dry goods store!" interrupted the Squire.

"Yes. You cannot afford to be fastidious over there; and to be in trade is looked upon as an honour, rather than the contrary. Francis Munn was the youngest son of a country gentleman in England; he went to California to make his fortune at anything that might turn up; and it ended in his marrying and keeping a store. They made plenty of money, and were very kind to me and Nash. Well, Nash started for New York, leaving me with them, and he wrote to me soon after his arrival there. Things were looking gloomy in the States, he said, and he felt inclined to take a run over to England, and ask his brother Miles to help him with some money. I wrote back a letter in duplicate, addressing one to the agent's in New York, the other to Caromel's Farm—not knowing, you perceive, in which place he might be. No answer reached me—but people think little of the safety of letters out there, so many seem to miscarry. We fancied Nash might be coming back to San Francisco and did not trouble himself to write: like me, he is not much of a scribe. But the months went on, and he did not come. One day, Mr. Munn brought in a file of English newspapers for me and his wife to read: and in one of them I saw an announcement that puzzled me greatly—the marriage of one Nash Caromel, of Caromel's Farm, to Charlotte Nave. Just at first it startled me: I own that; but I felt so sure it could not be my Nash, my husband, that I remained only puzzled to know what Nash Caromel it could be."

"There is only one Nash Caromel," growled the Squire, half inclined to tell her she was a simpleton—taking things in this equable way.

"I only knew of him; but I thought he must have some relative, a cousin perhaps, of the same name, of whom I had not heard. However, I wrote then to Caromel's Farm, telling Nash what we had read, and asking him what it meant, and where he was. But that letter shared the fate of the former one, and obtained no reply. In the course of time we saw another announcement—The wife of Nash Caromel of a son. Still I did not believe it could be my Nash, but I could see that Mr. Munn did believe it was: and at length I determined to come home and see about it."

"You must have been a long while coming," remarked the Squire. "The child is fifteen months old."

"But you must remember that often we did not get the news until six months after its date. And I chose a most unfortunate route—overland from California to New York."

"What on earth!——why, people are sometimes a twelvemonth, or so, doing that!" cried the Squire. "There are rocky mountains to

scale, as I've heard and read, and Red Indians to encounter, and all sorts of horrors. Those who undertake it travel in bands and are called pilgrims: and don't, some of them, get to the end of the journey alive."

"True," she sighed; "I would never have attempted it had I known what it would be: but I did so dread the sea. Several of us were laid up midway, and had to be left behind at a small settlement. It was a long, long time, and after surmounting great discomforts and difficulties, before we reached New York."

"Well?" said the Squire. It must be remembered that they were speaking of days now gone by, when the journey was just what they described it.

"I could hear nothing of my husband in New York," she resumed, "except that Abraham Whitter believed him to be at home here. I took the steamer for Liverpool, landed at dawn this morning, and came on by rail. And I find it *is* my husband who is married. And—and what am I to do?"

She melted away into tears and sobs again. The Squire told her that she must present herself at the Farm; she was its legal mistress, and Nash Caromel's true wife. But she shook her head at this: she'd not bring any such trouble upon Nash for the world, as to show him suddenly that she was living. What he had done he must have done unwittingly, believing her to be dead, and he ought not to suffer for it more than could be helped. Which was a lenient way of reasoning that put the Squire's temper up.

"He deserves no quarter, ma'am, and *I* will not give it him if you do. Within a week of the time he heard of your death he went and took that Charlotte Nave. Though I expect it was she who took him—brazen hussy! And I am glad you have come to put her out!"

But, nothing would induce Charlotte the First to assume this view, or to admit that blame could attach to Nash. Once he had lost her by death, he had a right to marry again, she contended. As to the haste—well, she had been dead a great many months when he heard of it, and that should be considered. The Squire exploded, and walked about the room, and rubbed his head the wrong way, and thought her no better than an imbecile.

Mrs. Todhetley came in, and there was a little scene. Charlotte declined our offer of a bed and of refreshment, saying she would like to go to her mother's for the night: she felt that she should be received gladly, though they had parted in anger and had held no communication with one another since. Gladly! ay, joyfully. Little doubt of that. So the Squire put on his hat, and she her bonnet, and away they started, and I with them.

We took the lonely path across the fields: her appearance might have raised a stir in the highway. Charlotte was but little altered, and would have been recognised at once. And I have no space to

tell of the scene at Mrs. Tinkle's, which was as good as a play, or of the way they rushed into one another's arms.

"Johnny, there's something on my mind," said the Squire in a low tone as we were getting towards home: and he was looking grave and silent as a judge. "Do you remember those two foreign letters we chanced to see of Nash Caromel's, with the odd handwriting, all quavers and tails?"

"Yes, I do, sir."

"Well, lad, a very ugly suspicion has come into my head, and I can't drive it away. I believe those two letters were from Charlotte—the two she speaks of—I believe the handwriting which puzzled me was hers. Now, if so, Nash went to the altar with that other Charlotte, knowing this one was alive: for the first letter came the day before the marriage."

I did not answer. But I remembered what I had overheard Nave the lawyer say to Nash Caromel: "You must marry her: where there's a will there's a way"—or words to that effect. Had Nave concocted the letters which pretended to tell of Mrs. Nash Caromel's death, and got them posted to Nash from New York?

With the morning, the Squire was at Caromel's Farm. The old-fashioned low house, the sun shining on its quaint windows, looked still and quiet as he walked up to the front door across the grass-plat, in the middle of which grew a fine mulberry tree. The news of Charlotte's return, as he was soon to find, had travelled to it already; had spread in the village. For she had been recognised the night before on her arrival; and her boxes, left in charge of a porter, bore her full name, Mrs. Nash Caromel.

Nash stood in that little library of his in a state of agitation not to be described; he as good as confessed, when the Squire tackled him, that he *had* known his wife might have been alive and that it was all Nave's doings. At least he suspected that the letter, telling of her death, might be a forgery.

"Anyway, you got a letter from her the day before you married, so you must have known it by that," cried the Squire; who had had so much to do always with the Caromel family that he deemed it his duty to interfere. "And now, sir, what do you mean to do?"

"I can't tell," answered Nash.

"A pretty kettle of fish this is! What do you suppose your father would have said to it?"

"I'm sure I can't tell," repeated Nash helplessly, biting his lips to get some life into them.

"And what's the matter with your hands, that they are so hot and white?"

Nash glanced at his hands, and hid them away in his pockets. He looked like a man consumed by inward fever.

"I have not been over well for some time past," said he.

"No wonder—with the consciousness of this discovery hanging

over your head!" retorted the Squire. "It might have sent some men into their graves."

Nash drummed upon the window pane. What on earth to do, what to say, evidently he knew not.

"You must put away this Jez—this lady," went on the Squire. "It was she who bewitched you; ay, and set herself out to do it, as all the parish saw. Let her go back to her father: you might make some provision for her: and install your wife here in her proper place. Poor thing! she is so meek and patient! She won't hear a word said against you; thinks you are a saint. *I* think you a scoundrel, Nash: and I tell you so to your face."

The door had slowly opened; somebody, who had been outside, listening, put in her head. A very pretty head, and that's the truth, surmounting a fashionable morning costume of rose-coloured muslin, all flounces and furbelows. It was Charlotte the Second. The Squire had called her a brazen hussy behind her back; he had much ado this morning not to call her so before her face.

"What's that I hear you saying to my husband, Mr. Todhetley?—that he should discard me and admit that creature here! How dare you bring your pernicious counsels into this house?"

"Why, bless my heart, he is her husband, madam; he is not yours. You'd not stay here yourself, surely!"

"This is my home, and he is *my* husband, and my child is his heir; and that woman may go back over the seas whence she came. Is it not so, Nash? Tell him."

She put her hand on Nash's shoulder, and he tried to get out something or other in obedience to her. He was as much under her finger and thumb as Punch in the street is under the showman's. The Squire went into a purple heat.

"You married him by craft, madam—as I believe from my very soul: you married him, knowing, you and your father also, that his wife was alive. He knew it, too. And now, I ask you both, what you mean to do in this dilemma you have brought upon yourselves? His wife is waiting to come in, and you cannot keep her out."

"She shall never come in; I tell you that," flashed Charlotte the Second. "She sent word to him that she was dead, and she must abide by it; from that time she was dead to him, dead for ever. Mr. Caromel married me equally in the eyes of the world: and here I shall stay with him, his true and lawful wife."

The Squire rubbed his face; the torrent and the heat made it glisten.

"Stay here, would you, madam! What luck do you suppose could come of that?"

"Luck! I have quite as much luck as I require. Nash, why do you not request this—this gentleman to leave us?"

"Why, he *dare* not keep you here," cried the Squire, passing over the last compliment. "He would be prosecuted for—you know what."

"Let him be! Let the wicked woman do her worst. Mr. Caromel, then! *do* you wish to keep up this interview until night?"

"Perhaps you had better go now, Squire," put in the man pleadingly. "I—I will consult Nave, and see what's to be done. She may like to go back to California possibly to the Munns; the climate suited her: and—and an income might be arranged."

This put the finishing stroke to the Squire's temper. He flung out of the room with a few unorthodox words, and came home in a tantrum.

We had had times of commotion at Church Dykely before, but this affair capped all. The one Mrs. Nash Caromel waiting to go into her house, aud the other Mrs. Nash Caromel refusing to go out of it to make room for her. Tongues pitched into Nash Caromel in the fields and in the road: but some few men pitied him, thinking what on earth they could do themselves, in a like position. While old Jones the constable stalked briskly about, expecting to get a warrant for taking up the master of Caromel's Farm.

But the great drawback to instituting legal proceedings lay with Mrs. Nash Caromel the First. She declined to prosecute. Her husband might refuse to receive her; might hold himself aloof from her; might keep his second wife by his side; but she would never hurt a hair of his head. Heaven might bring things round in its own good time, she said; meanwhile she would submit—and bear.

And she held to this, driving indignant busybodies distracted. They argued, they persuaded, they remonstrated; it was said that one or two strong-minded ones *swore*. All the same. She stayed on at her mother's, and would neither injure her husband herself, nor let her family injure him. Henry Tinkle, her brother, chanced to be from home (as he was when she had run away to be married), or he might have acted in spite of her. And, when this state of things had continued for two or three weeks, the world began to call it a "crying scandal." As to Nash Caromel, he did not show his face abroad.

"Not a day longer shall the fellow retain my money," said the Pater, speaking of the twelve hundred pounds he had lent to Nash: and in fact the term it had been lent for was already up. But it is easier to make such a threat than to enforce it: and it is not everybody who can extract twelve hundred pounds at will from uncertain coffers. Anyway, the Pater found he could not. He wrote to Nash, demanding its return; and he wrote to Nave.

Nash did not answer him at all. Nave's clerk sent a semi-insolent letter, saying Mr. Caromel should be communicated with when occasion offered. The Squire wrote in a rage to his lawyer at Worcester, bidding him enforce the repayment.

"You two lads can take the letter to the post," said he.

But we had not got many yards from home when we heard the Squire coming after us. We all walked into Church Dykely together;

and close at the post office, which was at Dame Chad's shop, we met Duffham. Of course the Squire, who could not keep anything in, had he been bribed to do it, told Duffham what steps he was about to take.

"Going to enforce payment," nodded Duffham. "The man deserves no quarter. But he is ill."

"Serve him right. What's the matter with him."

"Nervous fever. Has fretted or frightened himself into it. Report says that he is very ill indeed."

"Don't you attend him?"

"Not I. I did not please madam at the time the boy was born —would not give in to some of her whims and fancies. They have called in that new doctor who has settled in the next parish, young Bluck."

"Why, he is no better than an apothecary's boy, that young Bluck. Caromel can't be very ill, if they have him."

"So ill, that, as I have just heard, he is in great danger—likely to die," replied Duffham, tapping his cane against the ledge of Dame Chad's window. "Bluck's young, but he is clever."

"Bless my heart! Likely to die! What, Nash Caromel! Here, you lads, if that's it, I won't annoy him now about the money, so don't post the letter."

"It is posted," said Tod. "I have just done it."

"Go in and explain to Dame Chad, and get it out again. Or, stay; the letter can go, and I'll write and say it's not to be acted on until he is well. Nervous fever! I'm afraid his conscience has been pricking him."

"I hope it has," said Duffham.

A few days went on. Nash Caromel lay in the greatest danger. Nave was at the farm day and night. A physician was called in from a distance to aid young Bluck: but it was understood that there remained but little hope. We began to feel sorry for Nash and to excuse his offences, the Squire especially. It was all that strong-minded young woman's doings, said he; she had got him in her toils, and he had not had the pluck to escape them.

But a change for the better took place: Nash passed the crisis, and would probably, with care, recover. I think everybody felt glad: one does not wish a fellow quite to die, though he has misunderstood the laws on the ticklish subject of matrimony. And the Squire felt vexed later when he learnt that his lawyer had disregarded his countermanding letter and sent a peremptory threat to Nash of enforcing instant proceedings, unless the money was repaid forthwith. That was not the only threat conveyed to Caromel's Farm. Harry Tinkle returned; and, despite his sister's protestations, applied for the warrant that had been so much talked of. As soon as Nash Caromel could leave his bed, he would be taken before the magistrates.

Soon a morning came that we did not forget in a hurry. While dressing myself, with the window open to the white flowers of the trailing jessamine and the sweet perfume of the roses, Tod came in, fastening his braces.

"I say, Johnny, here's the jolliest lark! The Pater ——"

And what the lark was, I don't know to this day. At that moment the passing-bell tolled out—three times three; with its succession of quick strokes following it.

"Who can be dead?" cried Tod, stretching his neck out at the window to listen. "Was anybody ill, Jenkins?" he called out to the head gardener, then coming up the path with a barrow: "do you know who that bell's tolling for?"

"It's for Mr. Caromel," answered Jenkins.

"What?" shouted Tod.

"It's tolling out for Mr. Caromel, sir. He died in the night."

It was a shock to us all. The Squire, pocketing his indignation against madam and the Nave family in general, went over to the farm after breakfast, and saw Miss Gwendolen Nave, who was staying with her sister. They called her Gwinny.

"We heard that he was better—going on so well," gasped the Squire.

"So he was until a day or two ago," said Miss Gwinny, holding her handkerchief to her eyes. "Very well indeed until then—when it turned to typhus."

"Goodness bless me!" cried the Squire, an unpleasant feeling running through him. "Typhus!"

"Yes, I am sorry to say."

"Is it safe to be here? Safe for you all?"

"Of course it is a risk. We try not to be afraid, and have sent as many out of the house as we could. I and the old servant, Grizzel, alone remain with Mrs. Caromel. The baby has gone to papa's."

"Dear me! dear me! I was intending to ask to look at poor Nash: we have known each other always, you see. But, perhaps, it would not be prudent."

"It would be very imprudent, Mr. Todhetley. The sickness was of the worst type; it might involve not only your own death, but that of others to whom you might in turn carry it. You have a wife and children, sir."

"Yes, yes, quite right," rejoined the Squire. "Poor Nash! How is—your sister?" He would not, even at that trying moment for them, call her Mrs. Caromel.

"Oh, she is very ill; shocked and grieved almost to death. For all we know, she has taken the fever and may follow her husband: she attended upon him to the last. I hope that woman, who came here to disturb the peace of a happy family, that Charlotte Tinkle, will reap the fruit of what she has sown, for it is all owing to her."

"People do mostly reap the fruit of their own actions, whether they be good or bad," observed the Squire to this, as he got up to leave. But he would not add what he thought—that it was another Charlotte who ought to reap what she had sown. And who appeared to be doing it.

"Did the poor fellow suffer much?"

"Not at the last," said Miss Gwinny. "His strength was gone, and he lay for many hours insensible. Up to yesterday evening we thought he might recover. Oh, it is a dreadful calamity!"

Indeed, it was. The Squire came away echoing the words in his heart.

Three days later the funeral took place: it would not do to delay it longer. The Squire went to it: when a man was dead, he thought animosity should cease. Harry Tinkle would not go. Caromel, he said, had escaped him and the law, to which he had rendered himself amenable, and nobody might grumble at it, for it was the good pleasure of Heaven, but he would not show Caromel respect, dead or living.

All the parish seemed to have been bidden to the funeral. Some went, some did not go. It looked like a regular crowd, winding round the lawn and down the avenue. Few ventured indoors; they preferred to assemble outside: for an exaggerated fear of Caromel's Farm and what might be caught in it, pervaded the community. So, when the men came out of the house, staggering under the black velvet pall with its deep white border, followed by Lawyer Nave, the company fell up into line behind.

Little Dun would have been the legal heir to the property had there been no Charlotte the First. That complication stood in his way, and he could no more inherit it of right than I could. Under the peculiar circumstances *there was no male heir living*, and Nash Caromel, the last of his name, had the power to make a will. Whether he had done so, or not, was not known; but the question was set at rest after the return from the funeral. Nave had gone strutting next the coffin as chief mourner, and he now produced the will. Half a dozen gentlemen had entered, the Squire one of them.

It was executed, the will, all in due form, having been drawn up by a lawyer from a distance; not by Nave, who may have thought it as well to keep his fingers out of the pie. A few days after the return of Charlotte the First, when Nash first became ill, the strange lawyer was called in, and the will made.

Caromel's Farm and every stick and stone upon it, and all other properties possessed by Nash, were bequeathed to the little boy Duncan Nave (as it was worded), otherwise Duncan Nave Caromel. Not to him unconditionally, but to be placed in the hands of trustees for his ultimate benefit. The child's mother (called likewise in the will Charlotte Nave, otherwise Charlotte Caromel) was to remain at the farm if she pleased, and to receive the yearly income derived

from it for the mutual maintenance of herself and child. When the child should be twenty-one, he was to assume full possession, but his mother was at liberty to continue to have her home with him. In short, they took all; Charlotte Tinkle, nothing.

"It is a wicked will," cried one of the hearers when they came out from listening to it.

"And it won't prosper them; you see if it does," added the Squire. "She stands in the place of Charlotte Tinkle. The least Caromel could have done, was to divide the property between them."

So that was the apparent ending of the Caromel business, that had caused the scandal in our quiet place: and a very unjust ending it was. Charlotte Tinkle, who had not a sixpence of her own in the world, remained on with her mother. She would come to church in her widow's mourning, a grievous look of sorrow upon her meek face: people said she would never get over the cruelty of not having been sent for to say farewell to her husband when he was dying.

As for Charlotte Nave, she stayed on at the farm without let or hindrance, calling herself, as before, Mrs. Nash Caromel. She appeared at church once in a way; not often. Her widow's veil was deeper than the other widow's, and her goffered cap larger. Nobody took the fever: and Nave the lawyer sent back the Squire's twelve hundred pounds within a month of Nash's death. And that, I say, was the ending, as we all supposed, of the affair at Caromel's Farm.

But curious complications were destined to crop up yet.

II.

Nash Caromel died in September. And in how short, or long, a time it was afterwards that a very startling report grew to be whispered, I cannot remember; but I think it must have been at the turn of winter. The two widows were deep in weeds as ever, but over Charlotte Nave a change had come. And I really think I had better call them in future Charlotte Tinkle and Charlotte Nave, or we may get in a fog between the two.

Charlotte Nave grew pale and thin. She ruled the farm as before with the deft hand of a capable woman, but her nature appeared to be changing, her high spirits to have flown away for ever. Instead of filling the house with company, she secluded herself in it like a hermit, being scarcely seen abroad. Ill-natured people, quoting Shakespear, said the thorns, which in her bosom lay, did prick and sting her.

It was reported that the fear of the fever had taken a haunting hold upon her. She could not get rid of it. Which was onreasonable, as Nurse Picher phrased it; for if she'd ha' been to catch it, she'd ha' caught it afore. It was not for herself alone she feared it, but for others. An impression lay on her mind that the fever would

never be got out of the house, and that any fresh person, coming in to reside, would be liable to take it. More than once she was heard to say that she'd give a great deal not to be tied to the place—but the farm could not get along without a head. Before Nash died, when it was known the disorder had turned to typhus, she had sent the servants and little Dun out of the house. She would not let them come back to it. Dun stayed at the lawyer's; the servants got other situations. The gardener's wife went in by day to help old Grizzel with the work, and some of the out-door men lived in the bailiff's house. Nave let out one day that he had remonstrated with his daughter in vain. Some women are cowards in these matters; they can't help being so; and the inward fear, perpetually tormenting them, makes a havoc of their daily lives. But in this case the fear had grown to an exaggerated pitch. In short, not to mince the matter, it was suspected that her brain, on that one point, was unhinged.

Miss Gwinny could not leave her. Another sister, Harriet Nave, had come to her father's house, to keep it and take care of little Dun. Dun was allowed to go into the grounds of the farm and to play under the mulberry tree on the lawn; and once or twice on a wet day, it was said, his mother had taken him into the parlour that opened with glass doors, but she never let him run the risk of going in farther. At last old Nave, as was reported, consulted a mad doctor about her, going all the way to Droitwich to do it.

But all this had nothing to do with the startling rumour I spoke of. Things were in this condition when it first arose. It was said that Nash Caromel "came again." At first the whisper was not listened to, was ridiculed, laughed at: but when one or two credible witnesses protested they had seen him, people began to talk.

A little matter that had occurred soon after the funeral was remembered then. Nash Caromel had used to wear on his watch chain a small gold locket with his own and his wife's hair in it. I mean his real wife. Mrs. Tinkle wrote a civil note to the mistress of Caromel's Farm asking that the locket might be restored to her daughter—whose property it in fact was. She did not get any answer, and wrote again. This second letter was returned to Mrs. Tinkle in a blank envelope with a wide black border.

Upon this, Harry Tinkle took up the matter. Stretching a point for his sister, who was pining for the locket and Nash's bit of hair in it, for she possessed no memento at all of her husband, he called at the farm and saw the lady. Some hard words passed between them; she was contemptuously haughty; and he was full of inward indignation, not only at the general treatment accorded to his sister, but also at the unjust will. At last, stung by some sneering contumely she openly cast upon his sister, he retorted in her own coin—answering certain words of hers:

"I hope his ghost will haunt you, you false woman!" Meaning, you know, the ghost of the dead man.

People recalled these words of Harry Tinkle's now, and began to look upon them (spoken by one of the injured Tinkles) in the light of a prophecy. What with this, and what with their private belief that Nash Caromel's conscience would hardly allow him to rest quietly in his grave, they thought it very likely that his ghost was haunting her, and only hoped it would not haunt the parish.

Was this the cause of the change apparent in her? Could it be that Nash Caromel's spirit returned to the house in which he died, and that she could not rest for it? Was this the true reason, and not the fever, why she kept the child and servants out of the house?—lest they should be scared by the sight? Gossips shivered as they whispered to one another of these unearthly doubts. But you must please to understand that never a syllable had been heard from herself, or a hint given, that Caromel's Farm was troubled by anything of the kind; neither did she know it was talked of abroad. Meanwhile, as the time slipped on, every now and then something would occur to renew the report—Nash Caromel had been seen.

One afternoon, during a ride, the Squire's horse fell lame. On his return he sent for Dobbs, the blacksmith and farrier. Dobbs promised to be over about six o'clock; he was obliged to go elsewhere first. When six o'clock struck, the Squire, naturally impatient, began to look out for Dobbs. And if he sent Thomas out of the room once during dinner, to see whether the man had arrived, he sent him half a dozen times.

Seven o'clock, and no Dobbs. The Pater was in a fume; he did nothing but walk to and fro between the house and the stables, and call Dobbs names as he looked out for him. At last, there came a rush across the paled-yard, and Dobbs appeared, his face looking very peculiar, and his hair standing up like a porcupine's quills.

"Why, what on earth has taken you?" began the Squire, surprised out of the reproach that had been at his tongue's end.

"I don't know what has taken me!" gasped Dobbs. "Except that I've seen Mr. Nash Caromel."

"What?" roared the Squire, his surprise changing to anger.

"As true as I'm a living man I've seen him, sir," persisted Dobbs, wiping his face with a blue cotton handkerchief. "I've seen his shadow."

"Seen the dickens!" retorted the Squire, slightingly. "One would think *he* was after you, by the way you flew up. I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself, Dobbs."

"Being later than I thought to be, sir, I took the field way; it's a bit shorter," went on Dobbs, attempting to explain. "In passing through that little copse at the back of Caromel's Farm, I met a curious looking shadow of a figure that somehow startled me. May I never stir from this spot, sir, if it was not Caromel himself."

"You have been drinking, Dobbs."

"A strapping pace I was going at, I was, being waited for here,"

continued Dobbs, too much absorbed in his story to heed the sarcasm. "I never saw Mr. Nash Caromel plainer in his lifetime than I saw him then, sir. Drinking? No, that I had not, Squire; for the place where I went to is teetotal. It was up at the Glebe; and they don't have nothing stronger in their house than tea. They gave me two good cups o' that."

"Tea plays some people worse tricks than drink, especially if it is green," observed the Squire: and I am bound to confess that Dobbs, putting his state of fright aside, seemed as sober as we were. "I'd not confess myself a fool, Dobbs, if I were you."

Dobbs put out his brawny right arm. "Masters," said he, with quite a solemn emphasis, "as true as that that there moon's a-shining down upon us, I this night saw Nash Caromel. I should know him amid a thousand. And I thought my heart would just ha' leaped out of me."

To hear this strong, matter-of-fact man assert this, with his sturdy frame and his practical common sense, sounded remarkable. Tod laughed. The Squire marched off to the stables with an impatient word. Dobbs and I followed.

"The idea of your believing in ghosts and shadows, Dobbs!"

"Me believe in 'em, Master Johnny! No more I did; I'd have scorned it. Why, do you remember that there stir, sir, about the ghost that was said to haunt Oxlip Dell? Lots of people went into fits over that, a'most lost their heads; but I laughed at it. No, I never put credit in nothing of the kind; but I have seen Mr. Caromel to-night."

"Was he in white?"

"Bless your heart, sir, no. He was in a sort o' long-skirted dark cloak that seemed to wrap him well round, and his head, that was in something black. It might ha' been a cap; I don't know. And here we are at the stable, so I'll say no more: but I can't ever speak anything truer in my life than this, sir."

In spite of the blacksmith's superstitious assertion, there lay on his mind a feeling of shame that he should have betrayed fear to us (or what bordered upon it) in an unguarded moment; and this caused him to be silent to others. So the matter passed off without spreading further.

Several weeks later, it cropped up again. Francis Radcliffe (if you have not forgotten him, and who had not long before been delivered out of his brother's hands at Sandstone Torr) was passing along at the back of Caromel's Farm, when he saw a figure that bore an extraordinary resemblance to Nash Caromel. The Squire laughed well when told of it, and Radcliffe laughed too. "But," said he, "had Nash Caromel not been dead, I could have sworn it was he, or his shadow, before any justice of the peace."

His shadow! The same word that Dobbs had used. Francis Radcliffe told this story everywhere, and it caused no little excitement.

"What does this silly rumour mean—about Nash Caromel being seen?" demanded the Squire one day when he met Nave, and condescended to stop to speak to him.

And Nave, hearing the question, turned of a fine blue: the Pater told us so when he came home. Just as though Nave saw the apparition before him then, and was frightened at it.

"The rumour is infamous," he answered, biting his cold lips to keep down his passion. "Infamous and ridiculous both. Emanating from idle fools. I think, sir, as a magistrate, you might order them before you and punish them."

"Punish people for thinking they see Caromel's ghost!" retorted the Squire. "Bless my heart! What an ignorant man (for a lawyer) you must be! No act has been passed against seeing ghosts. But I'd like to know what gives rise to the fancy about Caromel."

The rumour did not die away. How could it, when from time to time the thing continued to be seen? It frightened Mary Standish into a fit. Going to Caromel's Farm one night to beg grace for something or other that her ill-doing husband, Jim, then working on the farm, had done or left undone, she came upon a wonderfully thin man standing in the nook by the dairy window, and took him to be the bailiff, who was himself no better than a walking lamp-post. "If you please, sir," she was beginning, thinking to have it out with him instead of Mrs. Caromel, "if you please, sir ——"

When, upon looking into his pale, stoney face, she saw the late master. He vanished into air or into the wall, and down fell Mary Standish in a fainting fit. The parish got uneasy at all this—and wondered what had been done to Nash, or what *he* had done, that he could not rest.

One night I was coming with Tod across from Mrs. Scott's, who lived beyond Hyde Stockhausen's. We took the field way from Church Dykely, as being the shortest route, and that led us through the copse at the back of Caromel's Farm. It was a very light night, though not moonlight; and we walked on at a good rate, talking of a frightful scrape Sam Scott had got into, and which he was afraid to tell his mother of. All in a moment, when just in the middle of the copse, we came upon a man standing amid the trees, his face towards us. Tod turned and I turned; and we both saw Nash Caromel. Now, of course you will laugh. As the squire did when we got home (in a white heat) and told him: and he called us a couple of poltroons. But, if ever I saw the face of Nash Caromel, I saw it then; and if ever I saw a figure that might be called a shadow, it was his."

"Fine gentlemen, both of you Clear and sensible! Seen a ghost, have you, and confess to it! Ho, ho! Running through the back copse, you come upon somebody that you must take for an apparition! Ha, ha! Nice young cowards! I'd write an account of it to the Worcester papers if I were you. A ghost, with glaring

eyes and a white face! Death's head upon a mopstick, lads! I'd not have wondered at Johnny; but I do at you, Joe."

"I am no more afraid of ghosts than you are, father," quietly answered Joe. "I was not afraid when we saw—what we did see; I can't answer for Johnny. But I do declare, with all my senses (which you are pleased to disparage) about me, that it was the form and face of Nash Caromel, and that 'it' (whatever it might be) seemed to vanish from our sight as we looked."

"Johnny calls it a shadow," mocked the Squire.

"It looked shadowy," said Tod.

"A tree-trunk, I dare be bound," nodded the Squire. And you might as well have tried to make an impression on a post.

III.

September came in. And on one of its bright days, when the sun was high, and the blue sky cloudless, Church Dykely had a stir given it in the sight of the mistress of Caromel's Farm. She and her father were in a gig together, driving off on the Worcester road: and it was so very rare a thing to see her now, that folks ran to their windows and doors to stare. Her golden hair, what could be seen of it for her smart blue parasol, shone in the sunlight; but her face looked white and thin through the black crape veil.

"Just like a woman who gets disturbed o' nights," pronounced Sam Rimmer, thinking of the ghostly presence that was believed to haunt the house.

Before that day's beautiful sun had gone down to light the folks of the other hemisphere, ill-omened news reached Church Dykely. An accident had happened to the horse and gig. It was said that both Nave and his daughter were dreadfully injured; one of them nearly killed. Miss Gwinny, left at home to take care of Caromel's Farm, posted off to the scene of damage.

Holding Caromel's Farm in small respect now, the Squire yet chose to show himself neighbourly; and he got up from dinner to go there and inquire particulars. "You may come with me, lads, if you like," said he. Tod laughed.

"He is afraid of seeing Caromel," whispered he in my ear, as we took down our hats.

And, whether the Squire was afraid of it, or not, he did see him. It was a lovely moonlight night, bright and clear as the day had been. Old Grizzel could not tell us much more of the accident than we had heard before; save that it was quite true there had been one, and that Miss Gwinny had gone. And, by the way Grizzel inwardly shook and shivered while she spoke, and turned her eyes to all corners in some desperate fear, one might have thought she had been pitched out of a gig herself.

We had left the door—it was the side entrance—when the Squire

turned back to put some last query to her. I and Tod went on. The path was narrow; the over-hanging trees on either side made it dark. Chancing to glance round, I noticed the Squire, at the other end of the walk, coming soberly after us. Suddenly he seemed to halt, to look sideways at the trees, and then came on with a wild bound.

"Boys! Boys!" cried he, in a semi-whisper, "come on. There's Caromel yonder."

And to see the Pater's face in a streaming consternation, and to watch him rush on to the gate, was better than a play. Seen Caromel! It was not so long since he had mocked at us for saying it.

Through the gate went he, bolt into the arms of some unexpected figure, standing there. We peered at it in the uncertain lights cast by the trees, and made it out to be Dobbs the blacksmith.

Dobbs, with a big coat on, hiding his shirt sleeves and his leather apron: Dobbs standing as silent as the grave, arms folded, head bent: Dobbs in stockinged feet, without his shoes.

"Dobbs, my good fellow, what on earth do you put yourself in people's way for, standing stock still like a Chinese image?" gasped the Squire. "Dobbs—why, you have no boots on!"

"Hush!" breathed Dobbs, hardly above his breath. "I ask your pardon, Squire. Hush, please! There's something uncanny in this place; some ugly mystery. I mean to find it out if I can, sirs, and this is the third night I've come here upon the watch. Hark!"

Sounds, as of a woman's voice weeping and wailing, reached us faintly from somewhere—down beyond the garden trees. The Pater looked regularly flustered.

"Listen!" repeated Dobbs, raising his big hand to entreat for silence. "Yes, Squire; I don't know what the mystery is, or what the wrong is; but there is something wrong about the place, and I can't sleep o' nights for it. Please harken, sirs."

The blacksmith was right. Wrong and mystery, such as the world does not often hear of, lay within Caromel's Farm. Curious mystery; wicked wrong. Leaning our arms on the gate, watching the moonlight flickering on the trees, we listened to Dobbs's whispered revelation. It made the Pater's hair stand on end.

The magazine will not let me finish before next month: and it's a true history, every word of it. I wonder whether some law could be passed, obliging editors to give you as much space as you want?

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ISLANDS.

By CHARLES W. WOOD, Author of "Through Holland."

THE early history of the Orkney Islands is shrouded in mystery. There was a time when, like all great people and places, they were unknown. When they first became known can scarcely be told. They are mentioned by Pomponius Mela as early as A.D. 45; by Pliny, Tacitus, and other ancient writers. The authentic history of Orkney begins about the ninth century, and is carried down uninterrupted to the year 1266, when peace was made between Alexander III. of Scotland and Magnus IV. of Norway. Few countries of Europe, it is said, can produce a more connected history of that date. Ages have rolled on and the Orkney Islands have ceased to excite any great amount of interest in the world at large. Very few people know anything about them; they cannot even describe their position and number, their resources or characteristics.

But, though the historical importance of the Orkney Islands is now over, they have played an important part in their day and generation. In the middle ages they were possessed by the vessels of the Norsemen, who would invade from hence the neighbouring coasts. At one time they would be ruled by a prince anxious to be an independent sovereign: at other times they would be under the dominion of Norway or Scotland. Caithness, Sutherland, the Hebrides, and part of the western shores of Scotland were formerly under the dominion of the Earls of Orkney.

Orkney is said to have been discovered some 400 years before the birth of our Lord. The first inhabitants of whom anything can be said were the Picts, a people of ancient Scandinavia: rude barbarians who worshipped Odin the God of War, and buried their dead after the most approved ideas of modern cremation: that is to say, they were burnt, and their ashes were enclosed in urns.

Their food consisted of milk and fish, their drink of water and ale. The latter was taken in horns. Of their dress perhaps the less said the better: though it is difficult to see how much can be said about nothing. Their *full* dress costume consisted of the skin of a wild beast gracefully thrown over the shoulders. They lived in houses built of wood, and painted their bodies, and tattooed them by the same process that sailors disfigure their arms and hands in these days.

The Orkneys were mentioned by the name of *Orcades* in the first century: and the inhabitants call themselves Orcadians to this day. A very pretty name, but a vowel makes all the difference. No one must imagine the Orkney Isles a modern Arcadia. They may have much to recommend them, but they are not an earthly paradise.

It has been thought, and it is not impossible, that the Orkney Islands were once attached to the mainland of Scotland. The Picts, in Caledonia, consisted of two divisions, south and north, each having its own Capital and Government. The Grampian Hills

separated the tribes: and no doubt these substantial boundaries enabled them to live in tolerable harmony. About the year A.D. 53 Claudius subdued Britain and Orkney, and the savage Scandinavians were quickly conquered.

In the fourth century the Saxons conquered Britain, and some of

them settled in Kent, and some in Orkney. A wise proceeding on their part, if they could only agree at a distance, for Kent and Orkney might be taken as the antipodes of Britain. In those days heathenism prevailed.

In the ninth century there came a change. Harold the fair-haired, King of Norway, arose; collected his forces, and sailed westward. He touched at Shetland, and then landed at Orkney; subdued the islands and pursued his conquests to the Hebrides, the Isle of Man, and parts of Scotland. He then bestowed the Orkneys upon Ronald, Count of Merca. But Ronald, loving his own country and people more than this new land, induced the king to transfer his bounty to his brother Sigurd, and to make him an earl. Thus Sigurd became the first Earl of Orkney: a title and form of sway that lasted for many centuries.

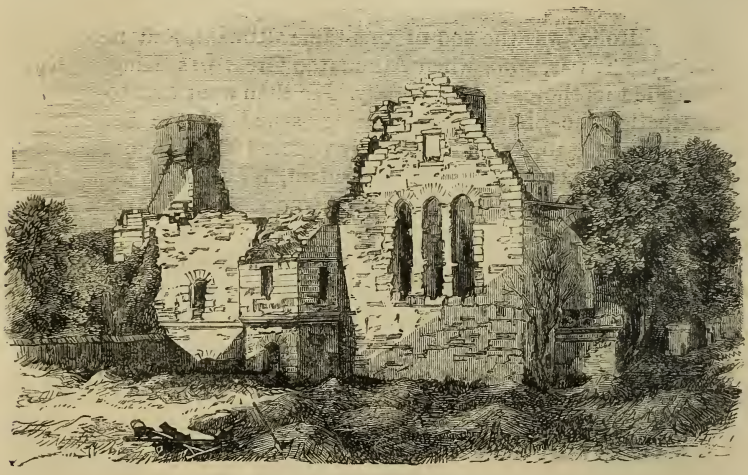
Rolf, or Rollo, was the son of this same Ronald, and nephew of Sigurd. He it was, who, when Alfred the Great was King of England, invaded its shores unsuccessfully. He then went over to France, where Charles the Simple was reigning, sailed up the Seine, took Rouen, laid siege to Paris, and finally married the daughter of the weak king. Long afterwards, his descendant, William the Conqueror, invaded the shores of England with more success—alas, for the noble Saxon Harold!—than his ancestor.

It would weary the reader to follow up minutely the fortunes of the various Earls of Orkney; and it is not the purpose of this paper to do so. In due time arose Magnus III., King of Norway, in whose day Ronald, son of Brusius, and grandson of Sigurd, sailed for Orkney. Here he was defeated by Thorfin, the reigning earl, a cruel and rapacious ruler, and fled back to Norway after a valiant fight. The following winter he sailed again for Orkney, surprised Thorfin, and gained possession of the islands. Ronald became Earl of Orkney; the most accomplished and amiable earl that had yet reigned. Thorfin took a pilgrimage to Rome, obtained absolution from the Pope for all his sins, returned to Orkney, and settled down into as wise and pacific a character as he had before been the contrary. He founded a church in Birsa, and was buried there. His two sons, Paul and Erland, succeeded their father, and were most wise and exemplary rulers. Not so their sons when their turn came. Hacon, or Haco, son of Paul, was proud and ambitious, and despised his cousins, Magnus and Erland, for their more peaceable dispositions. It was this same Magnus who was afterwards murdered by his cousin Haco, on the island of Eagleshay in 1110. Some twenty years later, another Ronald, Earl of Orkney, founded the cathedral of St. Magnus, in Kirkwall, which he dedicated to his uncle who had been so treacherously slain in Eagleshay.

The ages went on, and the world continued to revolve until the fifeenth century, when Orkney was annexed to Scotland. The last Earl of Orkney, and one of the worst, most cruel and tyrannical, was

Patrick Stewart. He flourished in the seventeenth century, and built the Earl's Palace, which remains so beautiful a ruin. This Patrick lived in great pomp and splendour. In the "Historie and Life of King James the Sext," it states that "He never went from his castle to the church—a distance of a few yards—or abroad otherwise, without a convoy of fifty musketeers and other gentlemen and guard. That at dinner and supper there were three trumpeters that sounded till the meat of the first service was set on the table, did the same at the second service, and also after the grace. That he made a collection of guns through intercepting pirates, &c., as that no house, palace, or castle in Scotland was equally well furnished in that respect." This wicked earl ended his days on the scaffold.

If the wicked earl's appetite was equal to the dimensions of



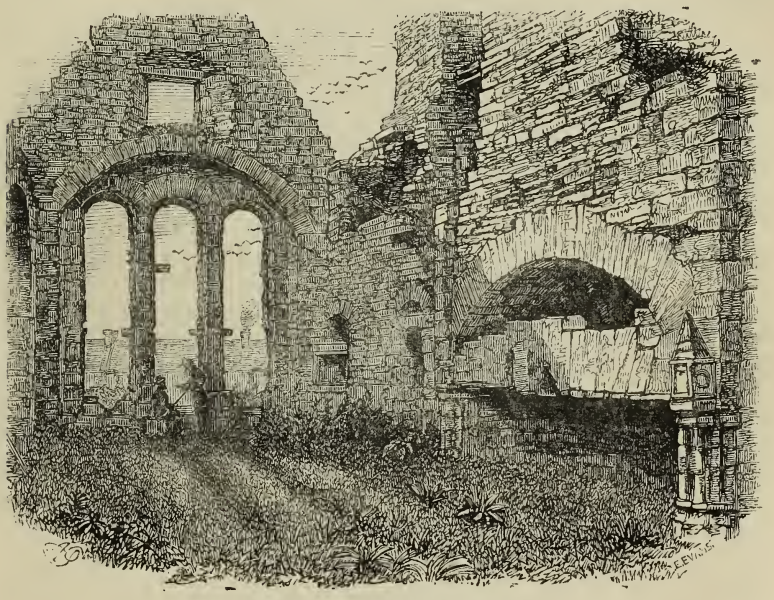
Ruins of the Earl's Palace.

the dining-hall, the trumpeters must have had plenty of work. It is now the ruin of what has been a magnificent apartment: 58 feet in length, high and broad in proportion. The windows are gigantic, the fireplace would roast a couple of oxen. The walls are of wonderfully solid masonry, but each year must bring some diminution, however slight, to the ruins. There are the traces of other fine rooms in this palace, though none equal to the dining-hall. Below, the corridors and apartments are dark and damp; some must have been cells for prisoners; others, rooms for muskets and for observation, where loopholes admit their scanty light. In the kitchens immense fireplaces, where you might have roasted not two, but half a dozen oxen, astonish one's gaze. Utterly uncared-for and neglected the ruin is now; in parts filled up with earth and rubbish: utterly unloved and unappreciated by the people of Kirkwall.

There were bishops of Orkney at a very early period. They ceased

with the abolition of the episcopacy in Scotland, towards the end of the seventeenth century. The bishop's palace is very much older than the earl's, and is consequently in a less perfect state. Its date is uncertain, but it is probably as ancient as the cathedral, if not much more so.

The cathedral and these ruins remain the glory of Orkney; silent witnesses of a day of greatness, power, and energy, of historical importance, such as the islands will nevermore possess. In the days of Patrick Stewart it was said that ten thousand men capable of bearing arms could be raised on an emergency. This would make the population of the islands much greater then than now.



DINING-HALL, EARL'S PALACE

Here is a copy of one of the oldest documents extant relating to Orkney: interesting perhaps only for that reason.

"Deed of Sale.

"I Henry Soost make known by this my letter patent that I have sold to Gottorme Georgeson and William Georgeson [the property called] Holland being one mark burnt lying in Papa Westra together with the booth which came therewith to the said Henry Soost [and] that I have received therefore the first penny [and] the last and all there between and that I have a right to get [In testimony whereof] I have appended my seal to this writing which was executed at Bendore on the Sunday next before the festival of St. Andrew Anno Domini MCCCCLII."

If, as has been observed, the Orcadians are in advance of the Dutch and fry their herrings, it must be admitted that the Dutch appreciated the rich resources of these waters long before anyone else. Year after year they would sail northwards and return with their heavily-built boats well stocked with fish. At length King Charles I. instituted a company of merchants for the purpose of gathering the wealth of these seas; but his wise plans and projects were interrupted by the civil wars. Charles II. resumed it, but was obliged to relinquish it for want of means, which went in other and less laudable pursuits. In 1750 Parliament granted a charter for the encouragement of the herring fishery, with a capital of half a million. The women made the nets and the men caught the fish.

At one time the chief trade of Orkney was the manufacture of kelp, from sea-weed. It was dried and then burnt by degrees in kelp-furnaces or in holes in the ground. When sufficiently burnt, the whole was stirred about with a long iron pole or rake, until it became of a glutinous liquid consistence something like melted iron. When cool, it was taken out in great lumps and placed in storehouses. When it was first proposed to make kelp in the islands the inhabitants in a body rose in protest. "They were certain that the suffocating smell which issued from the kelp-kilns would sicken or kill every species of fish on the coast or drive them into the ocean far beyond the reach of the fishermen; blast the corn and the grass on their farms; introduce diseases of various kinds; and smite with barrenness their sheep, horses, and cattle, and even their own families."

Here was a catalogue of evils sufficient to terrify the most determined, but the making of kelp began, and no evils followed. It is a substance composed of different materials, of which soda is the chief: used in the manufacture of soap, alum, and glass. At the commencement of this century the war had raised the price of Spanish barilla to an enormous amount, and kelp, taking its place, the demand was greater than the supply, and the price rose enormously. For long the Orcadians made many thousands a year out of this sea-weed alone. But when the duty on barilla was reduced, the demand for kelp fell away, and very little is now made in Orkney. The inhabitants have now turned their attention to farming, which is the chief occupation of the inland population, as that of fishing is of those who pass their lives upon the water.

We have spoken of the Picts, and the most ancient monuments of the country are the Pictish remains. The most wonderful are the Standing Stones of Stennis, which form a portion of two circles. The stones vary in form and size, the largest being about fourteen feet high, most of the others varying from eight to ten feet. These are a most curious and wonderful assemblage of stones, only equalled perhaps by Stonehenge in England. It is difficult to imagine how they were placed there. Antiquarians and historians have advanced various theories or probabilities; but none with

certainty or corroboration, and all may be wrong. At one time they were called Druidical circles; some have attributed to them a Scandinavian origin, others think them of yet earlier date.

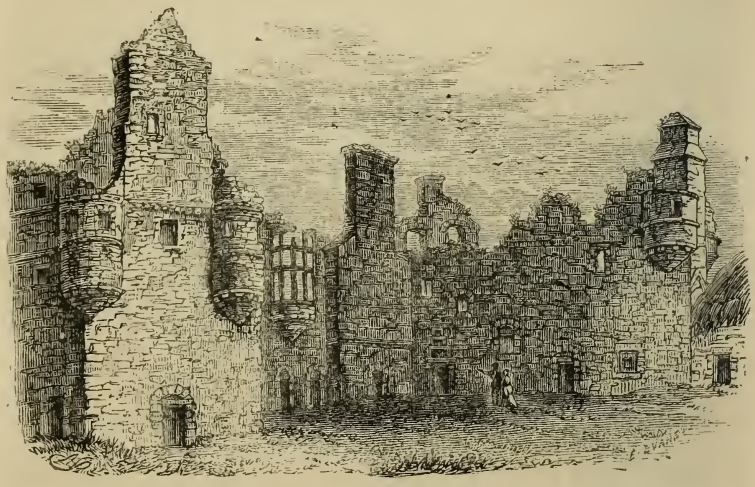
Very near the standing stones is Maeshowe, the most remarkable Pictish mound in Orkney. Although this may have existed some two thousand years, it was not discovered and opened until about the year 1860. The mound bears the appearance of a small natural hill covered with verdure. Opened, it was found to consist of a long low passage leading into a square chamber of thick solid masonry. The doorway admitting into the passage, is like the passage itself, low and small. There were not giants in those days, or the giants had to remain out in the cold. The day I visited Maeshowe I was on my road to Stromness. The person who drove me over had taken with him his wife and child in the conveyance—a species of dog-cart. He had been a butler in England in certain families of distinction; and I found him a most entertaining fellow. His powers of memory were marvellous, his intelligence above the common, and his anecdotes concerning many persons of interest, wonderfully shortened a long drive of fifteen miles.

Halting at Maeshowe, we entered the dark passage, and almost bent double, groped our way. The men lighted the candles in the chamber and so made darkness visible. As our eyes became accustomed to the gloom, we took in more easily the aspect and dimensions of the room. It was about fourteen feet square, and twenty feet high. Three of the walls contained a small inner room or recess, which must have been used for the purposes of sleep or concealment. The fourth wall of course gave admission to the room. The walls were of thick, solid masonry.

It was a most dismal looking place. A cold, earthy smell and atmosphere chilled one to the very bones. The candles flamed with a red, unsteady glare. Yet it was sufficient to reveal the Runic inscriptions upon the walls. When these were first discovered it was thought that mighty secrets were about to be disclosed: a key to the philosopher's stone, or Aladdin's lamp, or at least fresh records of a long past race. But, interpreted, they proved mere Norse records, of a period far in advance of the foundation of the mound itself. Grievous disappointment was the result, and the antiquarian world went into mourning.

We were not sorry to leave this tomb of buried centuries, and once more get out into daylight. It was a fine clear day, but cold: such a day as you do not always see in Orkney. The climate, as a rule, is mild and damp. A mist falls over the islands of the most chilling description; so thick that although you cannot say it is raining, you quickly find yourself wet through, cold and miserable—umbrellas are powerless to shield you from the mists. All surrounding objects are shut out, and you are walking in a thick white cloud.

This, after a time, is bewildering, and if you possess a pocket compass you will have now and then to consult it to learn whether you are steering north, east, west, or southwards. Frequently these mists creep over sea and land and hill without warning. You are walking along in bright clear sunshine, when suddenly all is changed; the sun goes in, the earth disappears, and you find yourself an object of misery and compassion. Rain also falls in abundance, unceasingly for hours and days together. No doubt it runs into the sea, or the islands would certainly be swamped on these occasions. But in its best days the climate of Orkney is delicious. A clear, bright, exhilarating air, not too bracing, but possessing a peculiar charm of its own. Owing to the nearness of the Gulf Stream the climate of Orkney is warmer in winter



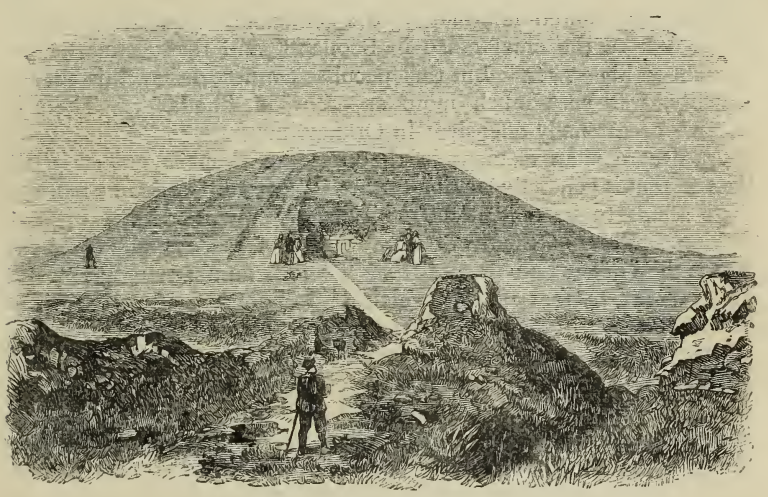
Earl's Palace.

and colder in summer than that of England. Frost and snow are rarely seen, and when they do come, very quickly disappear. At midsummer the nights are never dark, and the smallest print may be read at midnight. The moon, in this rarified atmosphere, shines with unusual brilliancy. One night in Shetland, I took a letter from my pocket, written in extremely small, most indistinct characters, and read it with the greatest ease by the light of a nearly full moon. Let anyone endeavour to do this in England.

So the bright days of Orkney are so beautiful that they atone for much rain and mist. No one can well be dull or low-spirited in this clear, soothing, yet exhilarating atmosphere. The Orcadians themselves think much of it. Yet they suffer from damp, and rheumatism is a very common complaint. So far from the world, many of them never think of going in for periodical migrations in search of health, after the custom of the English. They are more like our grand-

fathers, who lived in their homes and lands, and looked after the flocks and their tenants, their trees, their hounds, and their foxes from year to year, unmindful of change.

But then the Orcadians, like our ancestors, live a calm and peaceable life; the nervous system is in no way taxed; rest and repose are the privilege of the most busy. The two great events of Kirkwall are the starting of the daily coach to Stromness, and the arrival twice a week of the Scotch boat. This latter incident causes an excitement in the little town, especially amongst the idlers and busybodies; who crowd down to the pier, and during the hour or two that the steamer remains, fancy they have ceased to be an island, and become as it were a continent, so closely has the boat brought them into con-



MAESHOWE.

tact with the mainland. When the steamer departs and continues her journey to Shetland, the inhabitants go back to their homes, and excitement subsides into ordinary calmness. Some of them, if they want a change—for these ideas sometimes take possession of the best regulated minds—fancy they get it by going over for a short time to another island; though it would be difficult to state in what the change consists. But fancy, we are told by sages, goes a long way: a much longer way than the Orcadians sometimes go for change of air and scene.

Yet they are not without energy and enterprise. The better class are thrifty, and many of the shopkeepers and business people have saved no inconsiderable fortunes. There are three banks in Kirkwall, one of which is the finest house in the place. There are two newspapers printed by steam, one of which is called *The Orcadian:* and there is a reading-room. They print books and pamphlets, and

are altogether quite up to their day and generation. But they have no railways; these, it may safely be affirmed, they never will have. It has been said that they will be in Shetland ere many years have passed: a state of things not at all likely ever to take place.

The people of Orkney, and especially of Kirkwall, are almost a race to themselves, morally, if not physically. They are peculiarly radical in their notions, and think the world should be governed on the principles of equality and fraternity. In many of the shops the air they assume seems to intimate that they confer an honour upon you by serving you. A gentleman living near Kirkwall had occasion to ask several questions of the postmaster, and received a reply intimating in polite terms that he was to mind his own business. As it happened to be his business, as much as it was the postmaster's duty to give the required information, the gentleman in question referred the matter to the chief office in Scotland, and the postmaster was brought to his senses. But this peculiar condescension, this idea of equality, was very much more apparent in Shetland. There it became occasionally offensive: in Orkney, never.

And there is an element in the Orcadian shopkeepers, as in the Scotch, that is generally lacking further southward. Everyone amongst them seems to be a gentleman in his own way, and after his own fashion. Many of them would not be out of place in any society in which they might find themselves. There is an absence of vulgarity about them; of that element which grates upon the refined senses of more ethereal mortals. All have received some education, many an advanced one; and they all know how to speak their own language. The greatest kindness I received in the town of Kirkwall was from a shopkeeper; a man who was in every sense a gentleman; a member of the Antiquarian Society; who lent me curious old books connected with the islands, and showed me every possible attention in pointing out every object of interest, and in making me acquainted with the place. On the other hand, one of the chief magnates of the town, hearing that I was staying at the hotel, sent a message through the medium of a third person, that he should be happy if I went to see him; but neglected the courtesy of first calling upon a stranger. The loss of this acquaintance was mine undoubtedly.

The aspect of the whole town of Kirkwall is dreary and melancholy in the extreme. Many of the houses are very old, and their gable ends face the street after the Danish fashion. This is the distinction between the old and the new houses. The gables of the old houses face the road, the new ones are at the side. The houses are most of them ugly and ill-looking. You see a plain, very unadorned looking tenement, and are surprised to hear that it is inhabited by one of the chief people in the island. Poverty-stricken as the outside may look to a Londoner, the inside is made warm and comfortable.

The poorer class use peat for fuel. Much of the land is good for

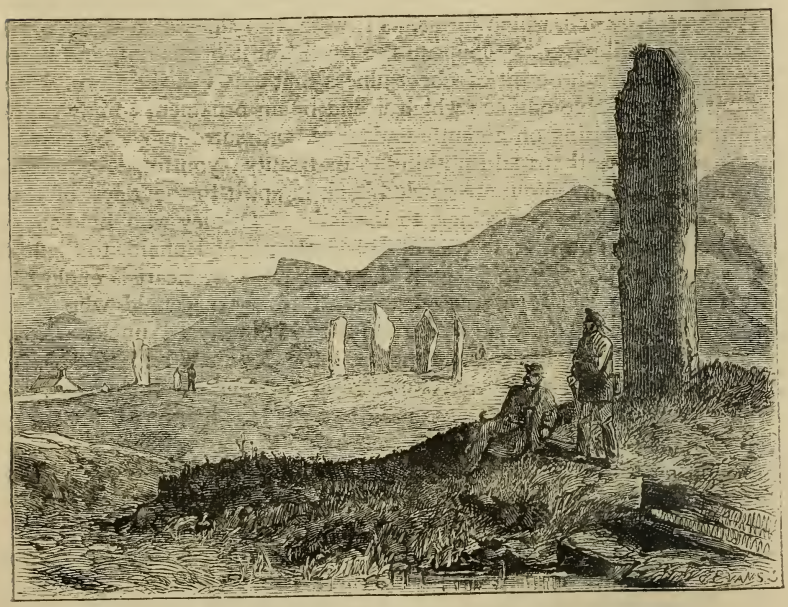
nothing else, though every year sees an improvement in the drainage and cultivation of the islands. This peat smell goes out into the air with delicious incense. In the interior of the huts scattered over the islands it becomes too strong to be pleasant. Very frequently the smoke has to find its way out in the same way that the people find their way in—by the door. Yet, desolate as the huts are to look at, except amongst the poorest and lowest, they are comfortable and quaint in their interiors.

In the town of Kirkwall itself coal is more frequently used than peat. But the coal is not a very cheap commodity, as it all has to be brought by boat. Thus there is less smell of peat in the town than as you pass a cottage on a country road. The one street of Kirkwall, which forms, as it were, two sides of a triangle, is narrow and ill-paved. Opposite the cathedral it opens out, and here comes the only little bit of cheerfulness that exists in the town. In front of this noble edifice; which would be an ornament to any town in the world, rising on a gentle eminence, and surrounded by gravestones which perhaps add nothing to its beauty; you forget yourself for the moment. You are carried back in spirit to the days of the Norsemen and the Sea Kings, to the jarls of Orkney who held sway for so many centuries; to Magnus of Norway and Ronald, to Sigurd the first jarl or earl; to Magnus the martyr, whose heart is enclosed in one of the pillars of the choir; and to that Ronald who first founded the cathedral and dedicated it to his martyred uncle. You trace the two styles of architecture—the Norman and the Early English—and are somewhat puzzled at the manner in which they seem to be interlaced. You come down in imagination to the time of Bishop Reid, who added the four most westerly pillars, and you gaze in admiration at the beautiful west doorway. Turning upwards you pass on to the ruins of the earl's and the bishop's palaces, ruins which ought to have been so much better prized and preserved than they are. You bemoan the bad taste which has just built a law-court or town-hall in closest proximity to these ruins, when acres of land hard by might be had almost for the asking. But it is much to be feared that the Orcadians, though in advance of the Dutch in the art of frying, are like the Dutch in their passion for thrift. And when thrift becomes a passion, it has to be distinguished by another name.

Every landed proprietor, small or great, in Orkney or Shetland is styled a "laird," and a laird's son the "young laird." This, to our English ears, sounds somewhat comical and pretentious: and if a "young laird" were to go to Eton, and received one kick for himself and one for the "old laird," he would probably return to his possessions with less exalted notions of the importance of his "lairdship." It must, however, in justice be stated that the title is thought more of by new comers and latter day folk than by those who, like the fine old Udaller in Scott's "Pirate," have, by centuries of possession, become small monarchs amongst the people.

The days and people of which Scott writes, however, are over. A new order of things has arisen. It was in the Cathedral of Kirkwall that Norna of the Fitful Head conveyed Cleveland away into safety. When inspecting it on that day which has already been recorded, some of us were particular in inquiring for this doorway and secret passage. "I fear," replied our antiquarian friend, "that it never had any existence save in the imagination of the great novelist himself." Well, it is the privilege of great novelists to take such liberties, to create and destroy: and who would quarrel with the very prince and king of his craft—that Shakespeare amongst writers of fiction?

One word concerning a custom in Kirkwall, in which the Orcadians



Standing Stones of Stennis.

set many people a good example. They are at all times quiet, harmless, and peaceable; but the Sundays there are observed with the utmost respect. The streets are almost deserted; an air of repose and rest forces itself upon the mind; riot and noise are unseen, unheard. The people come out in their best, and very wonderful and fearful costumes some of their best are; the flowers in the bonnets of the women more than making up for their absence in the gardens. But most of them go to church; and in whatever manner the after part of the day is spent, it is at least characterised by the blessing of peace.

Space presses, and we cannot quite bid farewell to Orkney in this paper. In the next perhaps we may do so, and set foot in Shetland.

GEORGE.

THREE o'clock on a December afternoon. The gas flared in the Waterloo Station. Not that it was any darker at three than it had been at two, or any darker than at noon, for there had been fog all day—heavy, impenetrable, yellow.

An express train was on the point of starting, and a young man stood at the door of the compartment in which he had already chosen his seat. He was waiting till the last moment, as young men will wait. Shadowy ghosts moved to and fro in the fog. A great-coated paterfamilias loomed through it ogrewise, gesticulating vehemently to his womenkind, who fluttered hither and thither like large bats. Ghostly doors stood open, and shadows flitted in and out of ghostly carriages. Every now and then a phantom truck rushed by and scattered other phantoms. Everywhere confusion, fog—when suddenly, within the radius of a flaring gas-light opposite to which our young traveller was standing, behold a vision! A beautiful girl, her two eager hands outstretched towards him, her face bright with a look of recognition, raised to his.

"George! and I never even knew you were come home—never knew you had left Canada. You are going down to Cragthorpe, of course? What fun we will have! I suppose grandmamma meant it for a surprise. But, there! Let go my hands—we shall lose the train. Mamma will think I am lost in the fog."

The little hands fluttered like captive birds in his grasp, released themselves, and the vision vanished One of the shadowy carriages engulphed it, for the doors were being shut now by a phantom form; which, as it drew near the flaring gas and came within its influence, took the likeness of a human railway guard.

"Now then, sir; time's up."

Our hero entered his compartment, the whistle sounded, the train steamed out of the station. But as it did so, far from making himself comfortable after the manner of travellers in general, he left the crimson rug still unfolded on the empty seat opposite him, left the pages of *Punch* uncut, allowed the *Saturday Review* to lie neglected at the bottom of the carriage where it had fallen, and sat upr[illegible] staring out into the yellow fog and pulling his moustache, unt[illegible] his perplexity he exclaimed aloud:

"But who *is* 'George?'"

For he was not George himself—that was certain.

In fact he was Philip—Philip Leigh, a young barrister not altogether briefless; although a long and toilsome road, with many hills

to climb, lay between him and fortune. About the said hills Philip had hitherto troubled himself little, such gentle acclivities as he had yet met with having served, rather pleasantly than otherwise, to vary the dead level of his ordinary pursuit—a systematic chase after pleasure. But no man can court a sterner mistress than the law. No coquette herself, she never forgives trifling in her votaries, and was even now sensibly withdrawing from Philip the few smiles with which she had hitherto encouraged him. He was just beginning to be aware that it was not possible to combine the merry, careless life he was leading with any hopes he might entertain of success in his profession. The object of his present journey was to pay a long-deferred visit to the home of one of his greatest allies. It so happened that, intimate as he was with Archie Thorpe himself, this was Philip's first expedition into Muddyshire. He had never met either Sir Luke or his wife. Still, Cragthorpe had been so often described to him, that it puzzled him to imagine who "grandmamma" could be, for there was no such person in his friend's family.

"Mistaken identity, of course," muttered Philip to himself. "How pleased she was to see me—*him* I mean." And then the idea occurred that "George" might possibly be in waiting to receive this bewitching little fog-fairy at Cragthorpe. "I shouldn't mind if she mistook me for him again—plenty of opportunities in a country house—rather nice if she were not to know us apart."

Yet, on the whole, he felt he should prefer it, if George were discovered to be still in Canada, or gone to Jamaica—no matter where, only the further off the better.

On reaching the station at which he was to alight, Philip looked out for his fellow-travellers; but by that time it was dark, and while he was finding his portmanteau, a footman had handed the ladies into the family coach—looking in the gloom mournfully like the family hearse—and the tall chestnut horses had ambled off with it, into the Muddyshire lanes. Philip followed in a fly. He speculated upon his chances of overtaking and passing the hearse, or of arriving with it simultaneously at their joint place of destination; but while he speculated, fate decided against either alternative. With a sudden lurch, the vehicle he occupied subsided into the mud: and, owing to the delay necessary for the repair of damages, by the time he arrived at Cragthorpe, all outside the house was dark and silent.

Philip found Lady Thorpe in a small ante-room. She was in consultation with her housekeeper: and, probably owing to the delay occasioned by the break down, seemed to have forgotten that another guest was expected. Turning hastily as he was shown in, she, too, exclaimed, as Letty had done—

"George!" Correcting herself immediately however. "What nonsense! Mr. Leigh of course—but really the likeness is very striking. You have been mistaken for Captain Bolland once before to-day, I believe. We are delighted you have found your way to

Cragthorpe at last. I hope you don't need to be told how welcome any friend of Archie's is to Archie's mother."

"*George* is Captain Bolland then," thought Philip, suppressing with difficulty the inclination to ask, "and who is *grandmamma?*"

"I won't make a stranger of you," continued Lady Thorpe. "Give yourself the trouble to go through that door; you will find Archie in the library and he will present you to Sir Luke."

Philip went through the door indicated, stumbled over something round and black which rolled away uttering discordant yells, and a tall, spare lady rushed across and fell on her knees before him.

"My love! my darling angel! my sweet little dear!"

Looking down at her, amazed, Philip was relieved to find it was not himself, but the snarling lap-dog he had trodden on which was thus addressed. The large library was full of people. Philip's first indistinct impression was that it was full of tea. There were women in bonnets sitting here and there, and tea-cups everywhere. Archie came forward to welcome his friend and introduce him to his father.

Sir Luke stood on the hearth-rug talking politics with a bald-headed old gentleman. "Glad to see you, Mr. Leigh. Better late than never. Hope you'll make yourself at home. Eh! what? Fly broke down coming from the station? Now I've warned that fellow Jobson twenty times that I'd withdraw my custom if he would persist in keeping such rattletraps of ——"

"But, Sir Luke," put in he of the bald head, "if Bismarck ——"

"Don't tell me!" exclaimed Sir Luke, wheeling round upon him: and they went hard at it again.

From his position near the fire Philip commanded the whole room. There was not a face that did not undergo a rigid scrutiny from the demure eyes so well under control that they appeared merely to bestow a passing glance upon the assembled company. But the object of his search most certainly was not present, and he deferred any appeal to Archie until he should be alone with him. The opportunity came at dressing-time, when young Thorpe was himself Philip's guide to the apartment assigned to him.

"It must have been little Letty Fairfax," said Archie. "She and her mother arrived an hour before you did. I can't say I ever noticed the likeness myself, but it is no bad compliment I assure you, old fellow, to be taken for George Bolland."

"Who is he? A relation, I suppose. Miss Fairfax seemed tolerably intimate with him."

"He is a native of these parts, a Muddyshire man; so, for that matter, is Letty—or a Muddyshire woman you know, it's all the same. George was a distant far-away nephew of Letty's father, and it so happened that all the estates went to him when Mr. Fairfax died without a son. George and Miss Fairfax were a great deal together —brother and sister after a fashion. But he's been in Canada these two years now."

"And, grandmamma?" asked Philip.

"Oh, that's how *we* come to see so much of them. Old Mrs. Middleton is a very old friend of my mother's family, and a good deal here, off and on; and of course we have the others to meet her."

"She doesn't live with her daughter then?" Philip found Archie somewhat vague in his explanations.

"What daughter? Never had one. Had no child but this girl's father. She was twice married you know—it's from old Middleton she got all her money; but he died in the year one, before her boy had left school. Oh, I see now! It's Mrs. Fairfax you mean. She is only Letty's step-mother; and a fine life grandmamma has always led her with regard to anything that in any way concerns Letty."

Fate sent Philip in to dinner with Miss Manvers, the lady of the lap-dog. Mrs. Fairfax occupied the seat on the other side of him, and her daughter was opposite. Miss Lettice flushed rosy red when she first met his eye, and her mother laughingly spoke.

"My daughter tells me she mistook you this afternoon for a very old friend, Mr. Leigh. She must have taken you rather by surprise."

"It was the fog," said Letty, leaning across the table and speaking very distinctly. "You are not in the least like George. I can't think how I made so absurd a mistake. It was the fog and the gas, and the confusion altogether."

Philip ventured to remark that Lady Thorpe also had been struck by his resemblance to Captain Bolland.

"Then it was because I had put it into her head: she must have been thinking of him," said Letty quickly: and immediately transferred her undivided attention to a straw-coloured moustache that had taken her in to dinner.

Such portion of Philip's attention as he could conscientiously divert from Miss Manvers was bestowed upon his other neighbour. He and Mrs. Fairfax were mutually pleased with each other. Towards the end of dinner, a harsh voice, which he had from time to time heard proceeding from his side of the table, was raised above the general hum of conversation to address Letty.

"Did you bring the silk, child? Forgot it, of course."

"No, indeed, grandmamma, I did not forget it; and I never made such a bargain before ——"

"Bargain! then it will be simply worthless. I beg you will not even show it me. Why on earth could you not go to a decent shop and pay a decent price? Have you never been *taught* that cheap things are the dearest in the end?" and the speaker leant forward to cast a reproving glance at Letty's step-mother, by which means Philip caught sight of "grandmamma."

Mrs. Middleton was a keen-eyed, withered, worldly-looking old woman. Philip's spirits sank at the sight of her. He fancied himself in the presence of his evil genius.

Next morning the guests at Cragthorpe awoke to a white world. Muddyshire had been better than its name. To the frost of the last few days was now added a heavy fall of snow, which improved the beauty of the wintry landscape. Everyone went to the lake, either to skate or to look on. Philip found it very delightful to be the guide of Miss Fairfax upon the ice, and to be scolded by her.

"How dared you take my hands at the Waterloo station!" she said. "I suppose *you* knew who you were? *You* couldn't have mistaken yourself for George Bolland. Why did you do it, Mr. Leigh?"

It was hard to remember they were new acquaintances: Lettice found it difficult to be merely civil and courteous when she had once called him "George," and looked up into his eyes with her own, so frankly happy. As for him, he was *not* "George"; but, all the same, he had liked it very much, and found it impossible to relapse into distant civility. Indeed, he had fallen completely under the spell of his fog-fairy. The beautiful winter days flew by like a dream. When the weather changed, indoor amusements took the place of skating. Billiards, battledoor-and-shuttlecock in the hall, and music helped to pass the time: which, however, was passing all too quickly for Philip. Lettice sang simple songs, the other girls flirted prettily over the piano. There was in the house a young cavalry officer afflicted with a cornet-à-piston, which rarely left him. The happy expedient was hit upon of shutting him out in the hall by himself when an attack came on, on pretence that through closed doors the sounds reached the ears of enraptured listeners with a softened effect truly magical. Opening the drawing-room door with a wide smile on his face, in expectation of applause he felt he merited —behold! the room was empty. He had been playing to empty space; a fact it took him fully two minutes of hard staring round the apartment to realise. After that, like the good-natured cavalry officer he was, he followed the party, who had all flocked into the library to act charades, and never alluded to his cornet. Morning callers interrupted them now and then, for the party in the house suited each other so well, and had grown so friendly together, that visitors were felt to *be* an interruption. Still it was a new pleasure to Philip at such times, to exchange glances with Letty and see that she also was bored, and to discuss the strangers afterwards. The discussions were not always charitable. Mrs. Middleton in particular was very severe upon her neighbours, and Miss Manvers aimed at being thought sarcastic and clever. Only Mrs. Fairfax was never unkind, and her daughter had quite a talent for seeing the best of people. She had a wonderful power of sympathy, too; and made herself quite unhappy over one of their visitors—a young wife, married against her mother's wishes, and unforgiven still.

"*Don't* quiz her, grandmamma! I can't bear the sad look in her eyes," said little Letty. "How *can* a mother be so unforgiving!"

"Perfectly right to be so," exclaimed Mrs. Middleton. "I've no notion of girls choosing for themselves. They know nothing of life, and their business is to be guided by those who do. Pray be so good as reach me my ball of wool, Mr. Leigh."

"But there *is* a guide, Mrs. Middleton, a heaven-implanted instinct," began Philip, as he obediently dived beneath the crimson cloth.

"Heaven-implanted fiddlestick! and take care you don't break the thread." She did not mean the thread of his argument, but of her wool, by this time entangled in the castors. "Experience is everything, and of that girls have none."

"Granted," continued Philip, from under the table; "hearts actuated by sincere affection do not rely upon experience. But need they do so? I am imagining a case where there *is* true affection, you know, Mrs. Middleton, and no other motive, and in such a case I think there should be great allowances made by parents, great care taken not to thwart the best and purest feelings our nature is capable of." He glanced at Letty, feeling a comfortable conviction that he was making way with her, for she was sure to applaud such sentiments. Behold! she was in convulsions of suppressed laughter.

"Oh, *please* come out," she entreated as soon as she could speak, "I can't bear it any longer. To see you on hands and knees under a table, holding forth about love and heaven's implanted instincts! *Do* come out, Mr. Leigh."

Philip emerged, and restored the ball of wool to its owner. But he had given an angry pull to the thread, and if he had entertained any idea of propitiating his evil genius, the result was a failure.

"Broken of course! If there's a thing I abominate it is an unnecessary join," grumbled Mrs. Middleton. "*Thank you*, Mr. Leigh," spoken much as if it would have afforded her infinite pleasure to box his ears.

"Won't you read to us, Mr. Leigh?" interposed Mrs. Fairfax hastily, not knowing what pleasant speech her step-mother-in-law might make next or how the young man's temper would stand it.

For as the rain had continued, Lady Thorpe was at her wits' end to provide amusement for her guests. It had been discovered that Philip possessed the rare talent of reading poetry bearably, and he had been duly pressed into the service. It was generally towards tea-time that these readings took place. Out of doors the rain poured down; within, the monotony of the reader's voice was agreeably broken by the gentle tinkle of a tea-spoon or a subdued clatter of cups and saucers. Some thought Philip a bold man to read to so large an audience, but as he was wholly indifferent to the opinion of everyone except Lettice Fairfax, he suffered from no uncomfortable feelings of nervousness at monopolising the attention of the assembly. He was glad enough to read now, and proceeded to select a seat from which he could command an uninterrupted view

of Letty's sweet face. He was not allowed to take his place in peace; Miss Manvers flew towards him with outstretched arms.

"Oh, my precious! Was 'em going to sit down on it!"

Aghast, Philip slowly sank into the angle of the sofa, but a yell proceeding from beneath him, interpreted the lady's words—her dog dragged its fat little body away as best it might.

"A narrow escape," said the young man, crossly. "I thought it was a cushion and made to be sat upon."

That evening the reading was brought to a sudden close by sounds which seemed more acceptable to his audience than the sound of Philip's voice. True, Lettice had listened intently, Mrs. Fairfax had dropped her work and sat absorbed, Miss Manvers, with her dog in her arms, had been a devoted auditor; but heads had been bent over needlework, lips had moved surreptitiously, in the silent counting of stitches, one had even ventured upon cat's-cradle with an admirer. A crash of drums and wind instruments was heard, and Philip started to his feet.

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Manvers rapturously, "it's the band! Won't you have it into the hall, dear Lady Thorpe, as you did last year?"

Forthwith everyone betook themselves to the hall—everyone, that is, but Mrs. Fairfax and our hero. As for him, why should he move? —the cavalry officer had carried off Letty. A rush of cold air, and a louder strain of music reached them as the outer door was thrown open. Mrs. Fairfax smiled, Philip sighed. Even Mrs. Middleton had followed the dancers and established herself in a corner by the comfortable blaze of the hall fire. It was a pity, she said, poor Miss Manvers should have no one to speak to while the rest made fools of themselves. Whereat Miss Manvers, who entertained hopes of taking a more active part than that of a spectator only, looked as cross as she dared.

But in a very few minutes little Letty crept back to her mother's side. She had hurt her foot, she said, and could not dance, and Philip wondered at himself for feeling so insanely sure that the excuse was a false one. A pleasant hour followed. They talked as it seldom happens that people do talk—simply as they felt. Letty soon became silent altogether, and sat listening to Philip and her mother, as subject after subject was touched upon, or some earnest view of life discussed between them. Philip felt his heart warm, and every good purpose or high resolve he had ever made grow strong within him. He talked to Mrs. Fairfax, but Lettice and he looked into each other's eyes. Such a state of things was a great deal too satisfactory to last long. It was interrupted by the entrance of Miss Manvers, saying something breathless about the "giddy mazes of the valse."

Miss Manvers was flushed: curious little wisps of hair protruded from her chignon. Evidently some one had victimised himself so far as to dance with her.

"And you can resist, Mr. Leigh?" she said. "The giddy valse has no fascinations for you?"

"I *never* dance, Miss Manvers," said Philip, quickly: which was, of course, an unmitigated falsehood. He would have danced with Lettice all night long if only he had the chance.

Philip had outstayed the limits originally fixed for his visit, but had been too glad to outstay them at Lady Thorpe's request. A man who did not shoot and who could read poetry, was invaluable to a hostess with a whole houseful of idle guests on her hands in dismal weather. But one day when the sun shone and nearly everyone was out, Lady Thorpe did feel a little surprised that Letty should be keeping her grandmother and Miss Manvers company in the library. They were presently joined by Philip. He held a portfolio in his hand, and Letty hailed his appearance joyfully. It seems Archie had betrayed the fact that his friend was an author, and Miss Fairfax had laid her commands upon her slave to read her one of his own tales. He laughingly consented, but begged for a small audience. Lady Thorpe and Mrs. Middleton sat together by the fire, the inevitable Miss Manvers was present—no one else.

"I never saw an author before," said Letty saucily to Philip as he prepared to read.

"I cannot say the same," remarked Miss Manvers pensively. "I once saw Mr. Disraeli," and she screwed up her eyes, and held her head on one side as if she saw him in the distance still.

"Oh, *he's* only a statesman," said Letty, and the story began.

We will not inflict it upon our readers. Lettice listened far more intently than she had done to Tennyson's poetry, but it does not follow for that reason that Philip's was the finer production. When it was finished, Letty took possession of the portfolio, and examined its contents. The two heads approached each other very closely; Philip bent over her to explain the plot of each tale as she criticised its title; their hands touched now and then as they turned over the sheets, they spoke in low tones—and every word they said might have been proclaimed upon the house-tops!

"You must read them all, Mr. Leigh," said the girl at last, "instead of the poetry, you know. You will, will you not?"

And Philip promised. A promise he was not destined to fulfil.

Lady Thorpe, deep in cogitation over a dinner-party, to be given in the following week, was roused from her meditations upon roast and boiled, upon squires' ladies and rectors' wives, by a sharp nudge from the elbow of Mrs. Middleton. The old lady was nodding, winking, pointing towards the table where the two young people were still occupied with Philip's portfolio. Lady Thorpe turned her eyes in the same direction.

"Good gracious! you don't meant to say so?" she exclaimed, *sotto voce.*

Now Mrs. Middleton had *said* nothing at all.

"I don't think you have been in my boudoir, Mr. Leigh; it is not everyone I admit there, but *you* ought to be no stranger. Your *carte de visite* has been pinned up beside Archie's, over my mantelpiece, this long time. Come."

The party had just left the breakfast-room. Lady Thorpe opened the boudoir door as she spoke, and unsuspecting Philip followed her. It was a glorious morning. Sunshine streamed through the windows, lighting up the brilliant hues of a profusion of hyacinths and rejoicing the hearts of a cage-full of canaries. Flowers, sunshine, the singing of birds, a bright fire burning in a polished grate!

"Now I wonder," exclaimed Philip, "what people want with Mentone and Nice, when they can make their own climate at home. I should not at all object to spend the whole winter in this charming snuggery. Is that the best likeness of me that Master Archibald has?" he went on, as he caught sight of his own face stuck in a corner of the mirror. "It is a vile one." (No one, by the way, ever *is* satisfied with their own portrait.) "You must let me send you another, Lady Thorpe, if you will condescend to accept it."

"Thanks very much. Of course I will condescend. But, talking of photographs, here is one you must see—one of George Bolland; your double, you know. The likeness does not strike me so much now that I am more familiar with your features, still the likeness is there, and it is a great compliment to tell you so."

She turned over the heavy pages of her large crimson and gold book, and pointed out the vignette of an uncommonly handsome head. Philip looked with some curiosity at his double. Handsome? yes, there was no doubt as to that, but—and the "but" has a comfort for him—there was something heavy and unintellectual about the good-looking face. He was still looking at it when a soft sigh from his hostess fell upon the hyacinth-scented air, words dropped slowly from her lips.

"Poor little Lettice! No wonder *she* saw the likeness. I am afraid she has been feeling it all this time. Don't you find her looking at you very often, Mr. Leigh? Of course you know they are engaged: there are estates depending on it."

Lady Thorpe prosed on about the estates, the canary sang louder and louder, but Philip heard neither of them, although in after life he never did hear the shrill song of a canary without being transported in imagination to the boudoir at Cragthorpe. At the moment he was only aware of the sudden downfall of his airy castle, deafened by the crash of its falling stones, blinded by the cloud of dust arising from the ruins. The room swam with him, and when he once more recovered sight and hearing, Lady Thorpe was still speaking of the estates, the canary still singing in its piercing tones. Philip's first reasonable thought was that he should like to wring the bird's neck.

"I confess I shall be glad to see little Letty in the enjoyment of her father's property. It was only because there was no son that it lapsed to George Bolland."

Commanding his voice with an effort, speaking as carelessly as he could, Philip answered that Captain Bolland had his hearty congratulations. Miss Fairfax, judging from the very little he had seen of her, appeared to be a most charming young lady.

"By the way, Lady Thorpe," he continued, "I have a confession to make, something to say, which I had rather say here than anywhere else. I suspect it is the atmosphere of this room that has brought me to my senses. If the truth were told, I daresay Archie comes here to confess his sins, and get good advice, and all that kind of thing."

Lady Thorpe looked thoroughly annoyed. She was terribly afraid of what might be coming, and could not endure "scenes."

"I have been idling far too long. In point of fact, I ought to have gone back to my work days ago: and I have been recklessly breaking all sorts of good resolutions by my lengthened stay here."

"But what could I have done without you and your reading, my dear Mr. Leigh?" cried her ladyship, considerably relieved at the turn Philip's confessions were taking. "Pray do not run away."

"You are very kind," said Philip, "but I think I must leave you to-day. Once beyond the walls of this room I might find it as hard as ever to tear myself away; but there is a good influence here that has recalled me to my duty. I'll look up Archie and consult about trains."

After a civil protest or two, Lady Thorpe began to do her best, as a good hostess should, to "speed the parting guest." "You will find 'Bradshaw' and the 'A B C' on that table," she said. "I keep all sorts of useful information here in readiness. Archie never knows the trains, and Sir Luke's 'Bradshaw' is invariably a month too old. They always come to me. What, *that* train!" as Philip, turning over the pages of the railway guide, pointed out one that would oblige him to start for the station in an hour's time. "You *are* in a great hurry to leave us, Mr. Leigh!"

"It is better so, Lady Thorpe; I must not run the risk of changing my mind," said Philip, gravely.

He would not trust himself to see Lettice again—heartless coquette as he now thought her. He would willingly have avoided Mrs. Fairfax also, but she was crossing the hall just as he started. She seemed very much surprised, shook hands with him warmly, and hoped they might meet in town; but the young man's cold manner, and the interference of Mrs. Middleton about the danger of fast driving and the bore of missing a train, checked her words.

Lady Thorpe and Mrs. Middleton stood together in the window as the dog-cart drove off. "A master-stroke, my dear!" chuckled the old lady. "I don't trust that woman for a moment."

Once more in London, Philip Leigh kept his good resolutions, and worked hard. Christmas came and went. He had no heart to go down to his own people, and passed the festive season alone.

"Women are all alike," he said to himself. "I *feel* it, because it is the first time it has happened to me, that is all, but it is exactly what everyone knows of them. Heartless little flirt! but no worse than others, I suppose."

And yet Letty's blue eyes would come between his and the page he was studying, and Letty's soft voice ring in his ears. It annoyed him to find it so impossible to forget her. He had told himself he should soon get over it; but far from that, as time went on, Lettice occupied his thoughts more and more. Was "George" at home? Were they married? Was the child happy with him and in the possession of the estates? Archibald Thorpe was abroad—Philip had not seen him since his visit to Muddyshire. He did not know whether Mrs. Fairfax was in town—fancied that he did not care to know. He was no silly moth to be for ever singeing his wings. Certainly he would not seek out either mother or daughter. Whether Letty was to blame or not—and his heart had already found excuses for her: with affections pre-engaged she might have been blind to the nature of Philip's feelings—whether Letty was to blame or not, Mrs. Fairfax had behaved cruelly in not letting him know the true state of the case: he never wished to see either of them again. And, so thinking, one February morning as he took a moody walk in the park, he suddenly found himself face to face with the two ladies.

Mrs. Fairfax greeted him warmly, as though they had parted only yesterday.

"Mr. Leigh! my good genius must have sent you in my hour of need! I have a piece of business on my hands I am not in the least fit for. We are supposed to be choosing a horse. Neither Lettice nor I know anything in the world about horses, and I'm sure we shall be cheated, or make some dreadful mistake. My coachman is riding him up and down now, and we are looking on."

"I shall be very glad to be of use," said Philip. "How do you do, Miss Fairfax? That's your man, I suppose, on the bay? Why, you could hardly give too much for *that* horse, Mrs. Fairfax! A noble animal! For your daughter to ride, I imagine," and visions of canters, in Rotten Row, by Letty's side, flashed through his inconsistent brain.

"*I* ride it!" cried Letty. "I don't ride at all, Mr. Leigh; and, if I did, fancy my mounting such a fiery creature as that! Oh, look at him now! I'm sure it's not safe for poor old Joseph."

In truth the bay, standing upright on his hind legs, was comporting himself in a manner very discomforting to Joseph.

"But what is he for, then?" asked Philip, puzzled.

"To go in the brougham," replied Mrs. Fairfax. "Will he *do* for it, do you think?"

"I'm afraid he would," said Philip, unable to help laughing: "and it would be a sin to put that horse in harness. Your man can't know what he is about. If you would allow me, I think I can hear of an animal better suited for your purpose."

The coachman and the terrific beast he bestrode were dismissed. Philip spent the morning walking with the ladies, called afterwards in Chester Street; and, after endless trouble and delays, succeeded in finding a horse that would do for the brougham in another and better sense than would inevitably have been true of the bay. Philip accompanied them the first time or two of using it. Other services grew upon his hands. In fact, he became quite at home in Chester Street, made himself useful in all the many ways in which a young man can be useful to ladies living alone, and fell once more completely and hopelessly under the influence of Letty's fascinations.

Hopelessly, he knew full well; for, as day succeeded day in this pleasant intercourse, he never forgot the fact of the girl's engagement, and fully determined that he alone should suffer. He would do nothing to win her affections. George Bolland's name was mentioned now and then, but very rarely. He had not yet returned, and Philip resolved that when he did so, he, Philip, would see Lettice no more until she was a wife. He had long ago acquitted Letty of all coquetry, her mother of all unkindness. "Of course," he said to himself, "Mrs. Fairfax imagined I knew of her daughter's engagement; Lettice must have thought so also, knowing how intimate I was with Archie Thorpe. After all, it is Thorpe himself and no one else who is to blame that I did *not* know it." And so, he continued to spend half his days in Chester Street, and to rejoice, as he sagely told himself, in the pleasures of friendship.

It was early in May. The season had set in. Not only the sweet spring season, but the London season also: which, after all, made very little difference to Lettice Fairfax and none at all to Philip Leigh. He went out occasionally, like the rest of the world, and met Letty now and then in society; but as a rule he worked all day until the hour came which set him free to find his way to Chester Street, where perhaps the ladies were more seldom alone than had been the case earlier in the year. But, on the whole, May differed little from February, except that the world outside seemed brighter, gayer, fuller of well-dressed people, and inside the drawing-room roses replaced Mrs. Fairfax's crocuses and snowdrops, and her daughter's dress was more summer-like. One afternoon Philip had met a flower-seller on his way and bought a bunch of violets. The soft dewy blossoms—probably the dew was owing to the nearest pump—smiled up at him from out of their green leaves, and he thought them an offering not unmeet for his little friend. Thinking tender thoughts of her and inhaling the fragrance of the flowers, he reached the familiar door-step. A gentleman had just come up to it and rung the bell. The two exchanged a few words, about the weather, and then the

door was opened. Philip made way for the stranger to pass in first.

"What name, sir?" asked the servant.

"Oh, no name; they expect me—yet I don't know, you see," addressing Philip, who wondered why the man should consult *him*, not knowing that this was a man apt to consult the person nearest to him on every matter, important or trivial. "You see, they may not have received the letter. Wouldn't be fair to take them by surprise, would it?" Then to the servant, "You had better go first and say Captain Bolland is here."

As the footman preceded the Captain upstairs, Philip walked out of the house. Straight back to his rooms, went he, through the streets where the sunshine seemed to mock at him, and the people in the passing carriages to be unnatural monsters of heartlessness because they looked as gay and careless as though the world were still a happy place. For him, joy had suddenly faded out of it altogether, as it spun on in the sunlight; a crazy, hollow, empty world, both mad and sad together. Reaching his own door and finding the crushed violets still in his hand, he flung them away.

For days he did not see Letty again. He was firm in his resolve. Had he not decided that thus it should be when "George" came home? The meeting in that little drawing-room haunted his imagination. Had she stretched out both her hands, and called his name, as he had heard her do it once before?

Three or four days later George Bolland called upon Philip at his club. He brought a message from Chester Street, something about a book Philip had been commissioned to procure, and an invitation to luncheon. Our hero sent a verbal answer, making some excuse for declining the invitation. But for the next three weeks he saw a good deal of his rival. George took a fancy to him, haunted his club, invaded his private den, interrupted him at work; and Philip, feverishly glad to hear of Lettice since he must not see her, alternately chafed at the very presence of the man who was to be her husband, and found pleasure in his company. The Captain never alluded to his engagement, but he seemed to be perpetually in Chester Street, and Letty's name was for ever on his lips.

These weeks did not pass without several invitations from Mrs. Fairfax to Philip: who regularly pleaded his work as an excuse for declining them. But one afternoon Captain Bolland came to his rooms the bearer of a more pressing request than usual, and said he was commissioned to use his own powers of persuasion to induce this extremely hard-worked individual to permit himself the relaxation of an evening in Chester Street.

But Philip Leigh was firm. As he sat down to indite his refusal, George established himself with a cigar in the most luxurious arm-chair he could discover.

"Is that the portfolio?" he asked; as his eye, in roaming about

the apartment, lit upon the receptacle of such of Philip's luminous ideas as had not yet become immortalised in print.

"What portfolio?"

"The one you read to Lettice Fairfax out of at Cragthorpe; I heard of it, you see. By the way, if you want a subject for a story I can give you one. You writer fellows often *do* want a subject, you know. Only there's no 'conclusion,' now I come to think of it. But you could work it round some way or other, I dare say—couldn't you?"

"Couldn't I *what?* I've not the least idea what you are talking about."

Philip was very cross; his pen flew over the paper.

"What is it I am to make a story of?" he asked.

"Why, about me. Me and Letty, you know."

Him and Letty! Philip frowned over his note. "Nonsense!" he exclaimed, impatiently.

"I don't see that. I've read many a worse story than might be made from ours. You'd only have to invent a conclusion of some sort. Of course, you knew Letty Fairfax and I were to be married some day or other. We were supposed to be in love—old Mrs. Middleton told us so, I believe. You see, she wanted Letty to have her father's property. Bother the property! *I* don't want it. The old woman talks as if I'd stolen it."

"Go on," said Philip, as he addressed his envelope. "It is to be hoped you are not going to marry *without* affection."

"Of course not. That's the story; that's what I'm coming to. I had not been three months in Canada before I was hit hard—very hard hit indeed. It showed me at once that what I had felt for Letty wasn't—wasn't the right sort of thing, you know—not at all the right sort of thing. We had been like brother and sister all our lives, but what I felt *then*—Ah!" and the cigar was resumed. Captain Bolland had no great command of language: his pauses were more eloquent than his speech.

Philip had laid down his pen and turned away from the table. He was afraid to trust his voice, though longing to bid his guest continue the narrative—afraid, if he spoke at all, he should shout, laugh, do something utterly mad and foolish. George went on.

"I was not going to be a villain, and jilt Letty. I kept my own counsel. Determined that the girl—the one out in Canada, I mean—should never know. But, somehow, after a bit *she* got hit herself. I saw she was fond of me—and there it was! If Letty was fond of me too, why Letty had my promise. There seemed nothing for it but to come home and marry her at once. But, by Jove, Leigh! I had not been in London three days—I had not been in Chester Street three hours, before I found Letty had made the same mistake I had! I knew the symptoms; brother and sister, that's all *we* were to each other. We had it all out between us last week.

Mrs. Middleton is in an awful rage: says I've swindled Lettice out of the estates. Now, wouldn't that make a story?"

Philip nodded silently.

"Found out her mistake long ago, Letty had," said the Captain, speaking with the cigar between his lips. "As long ago as last December," she told me——"Why, what now? made a blunder, eh?" for Philip was tearing up his note and preparing to write another, "all through my talking, I daresay. Very sorry: talking does disturb one. Can't write myself, if anyone talks to me while I'm at it."

The second note, however, was destined to follow its predecessor into the waste-paper basket, for Philip found, on glancing through it, that he had warmly accepted the invitation of Mrs. Fairfax for "December last." A third attempt was more successful, although the writer had very little command over his attention, so occupied was his mind in building up again the castle Lady Thorpe had so ruthlessly destroyed. Fair and stately rose the walls, and this time they were raised on sure foundations. On looks and smiles of Letty's, on sweet sudden blushes; better still, on confused silences. The words rang in his ears, she found out her mistake "last December."

When he had got rid of George Bolland, who went away still suggesting that Philip should write his story and tack on to it some kind of a conclusion for Letty, Philip dreamed away the hours until he dressed for dinner; then, finding that in his impatience he had dressed long before it was anything like time to start, sat down in the big arm-chair and dreamed again.

On the way to Chester Street, fear and hope alternated. She might have met many men "last December," any one of whom might be the right one. Or she might not yet have met her fate at all, only have come to know that her fate was not George. By the time the house was reached, Philip was in the depths of despair, and when he opened the drawing-room door, he had no hope left.

But Lettice was alone, and at sight of her, hope most unaccountably revived. A little surprised, perhaps, to see him so early, for in spite of the delay to which he had compelled himself, he was still unfashionably punctual, she came towards him, with both hands held out and an exclamation of pleasure. A vision rose before him of the fog at Waterloo Station. He took the two hands in his, as he had taken them then, and ——

Surely the reader may be left, as George would say, to tack on some sort of a conclusion for himself?

SIGNS.

Last night we parted at her door:
I held her hand a moment's space
And whispered, seeing not her face,
"If you should wander on the shore
To-morrow, when the day is o'er,
I'll hold it as a sign of grace!"
To which she answered not a word,
And gave no sign that she had heard.

So when to-day was red and spent
With angry battles in the west,
Through summer lanes I went, oppress'd,
By hours of doubt and discontent,
Plucking a daisy as I went,
In anger half, and half in jest,
Asking "Elle m'aime?" "Un peu?" "Beaucoup?"
"Passionnément?" or "Point du tout?"

A foolish jest—and yet I stood
Spell-bound, as one that reads his fate—
All things have meaning, small and great.
Passionnément! the sign was good!
Uprose three magpies from the wood,
A pair, and one without a mate—
A wedding, so the people say;
Good omens are abroad to-day!

Down on the shore the waves ran free
In sunset colours, fold on fold,
Crimson and amethyst and gold
They flushed like an enchanted sea,
While in the sky, a sign to me,
The new young moon hung white and cold.
I turned the coin upon my chain,
And wished a wish—not all in vain!

For over level wastes of sand
She came, with steps sedately slow,
Between the twilight and the glow,
The shining sea, the shadowy land,
With favour in her outstretched hand,
And eyes whose smiling told me so!
Dear eyes, your sign of welcome sweet
Made all the other signs complete!

G. B. STUART.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

FINDING THE DRESS.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER VII.

THE STORM.

IT was the first day of June; looking at the weather, it might have been pronounced November; rarely, indeed, has June seen such a day as that. But, if the weather was bad, the inhabitants of Abbeyland were unusually active and gay; all, their best attire donned, making the most of their holiday. Windows and casements seemed alive with heads; groups gathered under shelter in doorways, in the shops, and in the blacksmith's forge, all watching the road in a flutter of expectation, for Guy, Lord of Pomeroy was to pass with his bride.

Twice already had the gazers been gratified. Once when the string of carriages, containing the bride and her friends, had gone forth to the chapel attached to Pomeroy Abbey; and again at the conclusion of the ceremony, when they went back to the White House to breakfast, the bride then sitting by her lord in his new and handsome chariot. A chariot emblazoned with the old arms and quarterings of the Pomeroys, and drawn by four greys, splendidly caparisoned. A goodly sight, indeed: but what a day!

Fair and calm and lovely had the weather been throughout the past month, and when the people of Abbeyland went to rest the previous evening it had appeared as settled as fair. In the morning when they rose, the sky was of a dark lead colour, gloomy and threatening clouds overspread the earth like a pall, and a sighing wind swept along in mournful wails, now dropping to a low dirge, now meeting, as it seemed, from all quarters, and battling in fury. No rain fell as

yet, no lightning came to terrify the timid, no thunder to appal them: but if ever the elements were gathering for sure warfare, they were that morning. And in this threatening weather the bride and her train went forth to the chapel at mid-day.

A bride bright and beautiful was she: and so she looked as she stood before the array of priests in her chaplet of white roses and orange-blossoms, the veil thrown back from her face, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks flushed to brilliancy. All signs of happiness, quoth the company around, arrayed in their feathers and their laces: they little suspected that it was but the flush of excitement, of misery if you will; or that she had disliked the Lord of Pomeroy, while she passionately loved another.

How fortunate Alice Wylde was, they deemed, to have gained that prize in the matrimonial lottery for which many had striven! And she, flighty, vain, ill-trained, worse-disciplined, disappointed in him whom she had loved, had thought she could not do better than hasten to be somebody else's wife, if only to be revenged on the false lover: and when that somebody chanced to be the Lord of Pomeroy, to be raised to whose position she might have counted the world well lost, Alice Wylde had not hesitated. Some right-minded girls might have shrunk from the indelicacy of marrying one brother when they had loved the other. Not so Alice Wylde. To be Lady of Pomeroy she would have sacrificed more than any trifling reluctance that might haunt her of that kind.

And there she knelt in the chapel by the bridegroom's side, promising to be to him ever a loving and faithful wife. The sisters, Isabel, the wife of the Honourable Mr. Capel, and Joan Pomeroy, stood near her; Joan smartly attired for once. Next to them was the bride's mother, resplendent in satins. The greater portion of this gorgeous crowd were guests for the day only, to be entertained at the White House; where, according to popular belief, feasting was to prevail all day; and in the evening the bride and bridegroom would take up their abode at the abbey.

That such a morning should have arisen, so unnatural in the sweet month of June, struck all with dismay. We like the sun to shine at festivals. During the ceremony in the chapel, the darkness grew deeper, a darkness rarely experienced in the day-time. His Eminence the Cardinal, who had travelled down to preside at the nuptial mass, had to rub his spectacles. The old Gothic chapel with its narrow casements, in keeping with the Gothic abbey beside it, became so obscure that one countenance could not be distinguished from another, and when the bride was required to write her name in the book, she objected, saying that she could not see. One of the tapers used in the ceremony was brought near, and by its light she wrote what was required of her. In this gloom, at the conclusion of the ceremony, but still in no rain, the procession took its way back to the White House, where the bridal entertainments were held.

And so the hours passed; the spectators, gathered in the cottages in Abbeyland, feasting a little on their own score, and gossiping away the day until the last instalment of the pageantry should pass and gladden their sight.

Evening came. And with it the jarring storm that had strangely held off so long; wind, rain, thunder, lightning: in the midst of which Guy Pomeroy must bring forth his bride to conduct her to the abbey. The Lords of Pomeroy condescended not to the wedding tour, a fashion introduced of later years: the former lords had taken their brides straight from their maiden to their wedded home, and the modern lords disdained to abjure the custom.

"Why do they tarry?" uttered Whittaker's wife to a knot of neighbours, who had collected within her dwelling-house. Naomi Rex, from the forest, made one of them. She had been at the abbey, and in the chapel, and had now come to Whittaker's with her niece Bridget. The old woman had white satin ribbons on her cap, and Bridget was as smart as she dare be. "Half-past seven's the clock," continued Rhode Whittaker, "and they were to have come forth on the stroke of the hour."

"Why, they tarry for the weather, to be sure," spoke her husband, the second keeper.

"Nay, then they may put off their bridal garments, and Madam Wylde may just have 'em for the night," retorted Rhode Whittaker, who liked nothing so much as the sound of her own tongue. "There's no chance of this storm slackening; and that the Lord of Pomeroy may see for himself."

"At three o'clock, the banquet was to be. Why don't they come?"

"Don't be impatient, you women," exclaimed Whittaker himself, who was standing at the open door, half in, half out. "They'll come, all in time: trust the Lord of Pomeroy for that. A bad day, sir," he added, touching his hat to his master, John Gaunt, who was passing.

"Aunt Rhode," screamed out a girl of nineteen, "I wouldn't be married on such a day as this, if I had to stop single all my life. It bodes ill luck."

"Hush-sh-sh!" came the prolonged caution from several lips. It was a bold tongue in Abbeyland that dared hint at ill-luck for a Pomeroy.

"There's nobody here but ourselves," returned the girl, in a subdued tone. "And I didn't send the storm. It's come, and there can't be harm in saying that it is. To me it seems to bode frightful luck."

"The same thing has been in my mind all day," whispered Naomi Rex, from the arm-chair, near the fire. "When I got up this morning, and saw the dead ghostly look of things—yes, you may question it, but they had a blue ghostly look, just as they had that

day last year when the heavens were darkened for the—what was it called?—the eclipse of the sun, and the cocks set on to crow at mid-day. So it has looked all day since. Thought I to myself—if ever there's ill-luck meant to be foreshadowed, it must be, this day, for the Lord and new Lady of Pomeroy. As Mary Lamp says, we did not send the storm; but, as it is here, I see not why it should not be spoken of—and the fear it brings to thoughtful minds."

"And, I just ask you all," returned the girl, delighted at being upheld in her treason by so eminent an authority as Naomi Rex, "did you ever see such lightning, or hear such thunder? Aunt Rhode knows it, though she snubs me. Hark to that peal!"

"Yes, Mary Lamp's right—it is a storm, and a day altogether out of the common," assented Naomi. "Hardly a minute of this blessed day but my silent prayers have been going up to Heaven, that the ill it too surely seems to portend may be averted."

"Strange the lord didn't have his brother, Mr. Rupert, to the wedding," cried a woman who was mounted on a chair. "Perhaps, Mr. Rupert don't care for weddings."

"He'd care for the feasting that is to come after it, though. There's to be open house at the abbey for nine days to come, and the lord and the lady are to top the feasting tables."

"I wish Mr. Rupert had been the heir," exclaimed Mary Lamp, enthusiastically. "He's a rare brave man to speak to, with a merry eye: but the lord's as cold as a stone."

An unlucky remark: the girl nearly got buffeted. The gay Rupert was not held in the favour that the lord was, for his faults were certainly not those of being cold or stony; and though the community did not praise him, it would not blame. Harsh tongues were let loose upon the girl.

"Thee'dst better not get within ken o' Mr. Rupert's merry eye, I can tell thee that, girl, or may be thee'dst find thy own the sadder for it," said an old man who sat in the opposite chair to Naomi.

The girl looked as though she would like to rebel. "I don't care," cried she: "you are all ready to lie down and let the lord step over you as he walks, but he's not half the pleasant lord that his father was, nor that Mr. Rupert would have made; I said no more than that, and where's the ill of it? T'other day he was riding out of the bean-field, none of the grooms after him, and I pulled the gate back for him and held it wide. He rode through, as stiff as a log of wood, never so much as saying thank ye, or turning his eye to see who it was, holding it."

"He is the Lord of Pomeroy, and we are his vassals," replied Mrs. Whittaker. "And you had better not talk so free, Mary Lamp. Holy Virgin! did you see that flash?"

"Here's something else to see," cried Whittaker, putting his head round the door-post again. "They be coming at last."

In spite of the wind and the pelting rain—in spite of the forked dangerous lightning and the resounding thunder, out went the younger women, leaving the windows for the aged. Out they pressed from all parts and from all quarters, until the road seemed lined, as by magic—to see those whom they had seen hundreds of times before.

But not in their bridal attire: and that was worn now. It had not been put off. The wreath of roses and orange-blossoms was yet on the bride's head, the flowing veil still fell behind her; but her cheeks' crimson had gone. The Lord of Pomeroy sat by her in his towering height; she looked as a little girl beside him; and his ever-pale complexion was not a whit less ghastly than usual, and his hare-lip was only too conspicuous. But for that lip and the unnaturally white skin, he would have been a very handsome man: handsome in a degree he was now, for his features, save the upper lip, were perfectly formed, his grey eyes were beautiful, and his height and figure of noble presence.

"She's pale now," cried one of the women; "she doesn't like the storm."

"*I* shouldn't," put in Mary Lamp. "Is Jeffs making his horses go slowly that we may see the better?"

"Psha, child!" rebuked a man who was standing next her. "Don't you see that Jeffs is keeping his reins tight over 'em? If he let 'em get their heads, they'd be off. Those dumb creatures be more frightened at a storm like this than are human people."

Jeffs, the coachman, sat on his box, seeming, indeed, to have as much as he could manage in the four grey horses. The carriage had been waiting at the White House at seven o'clock; and the half hour after it had struck before the lord and his bride came forth.

In that space of time the horses had become thoroughly frightened by the storm, almost unmanageable; and Jeffs, keeping his own place on the hammercloth, was reduced to the humiliation (very great to him) of ordering the two footmen to hold the heads of the leaders. So that this proud office, of which Jeffs had thought so much—that of driving home his lord and his new lady—had partially collapsed: the glitter and glare had been taken off it. From the time of starting from the White House, the storm seemed to grow worse with every minute, the horses to become more terrified, and Jeffs had had his hands full.

"Pray the patron saint of the Pomeroys to keep back that lightning, or I shan't master 'em!" ejaculated he to himself, just as they were passing the dwelling of Whittaker.

The patron saint was deaf to poor Jeffs. For, in the very next moment a flash came, worse than any preceding it. It was followed by an awful crash of thunder; the horses reared, plunged, curveted, and finally started away at a mad pace. The two footmen, standing up behind in purple and silver, with their gold-headed canes,

bent aside in dismay to look beyond the chariot, to see whither they might be going.

"Holy Mary, help us!" uttered Jeffs. "A pretty wedding-day this is!"

And, if they were frightened, these hardy men, what must the young bride have been? She uttered a faint scream as the horses dashed onwards, started partially up, and seized the handle of the carriage door to open it. Guy drew her down again.

"Alice, what are you thinking of? It would be certain death."

She turned her white and terror-stricken face upon him. "Better walk to the abbey, through the storm and the rain, than be at the mercy of these wild horses."

"They are frightened, like you, my dearest. Jeffs can manage them. See, they are slackening their speed."

"We had better walk—if we could but get out! Oh, Guy, let us walk!"

He shook his head. It was a perilous situation, growing more perilous with every flash: but their best chance, indeed, their only chance, lay in keeping quiet within the closed carriage.

"Guy, what a day!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears of present terror; while a vague, undefined feeling of dread pervaded her as to the future. "I wish we had put it off until to-morrow. Theresa suggested it when she saw what dreadful weather it was—but mamma laughed at her."

Guy Pomeroy did not answer. He hastily turned her face towards him, so that she could not see out, and held it there, as if caressingly. The horses were at their worst. Now galloping, now rearing, plunging, and stamping in fury, and now galloping again, on they went. Guy sat, upright and calm, and she clung to him: the terrified footmen, putting life before etiquette, managed to get carefully down and reach terra firma. One fell as he let go his hold, the other staggered: but they were in safety. They ran after the carriage with their sticks, just as many of the spectators, who had been standing to see it pass, were also running. Jeffs had lost all command, and the horses were as furies.

The Lord of Pomeroy put his head out at the front window, and called aloud to his trusty coachman. "Jeffs, take care: tighten the left rein, or they'll pass the turning." And down he sat again, and shielded his bride's face as before. She was shivering. "Courage, my love," he whispered: "another minute or two, and we shall be in the more sheltered drive, close to the abbey."

Jeffs was skilful and experienced, and Jeffs "took care," as his lord enjoined; but skill and care are sometimes powerless to arrest the career of animals, frightened to madness. The rein was tightened in vain; the horses would not turn on their proper path but dashed blindly forward beyond it. And those, following behind, uttered a shrill cry of despair as the horses passed it and tore on-

wards, for they were plunging on to a dangerous road—a road which on one side had no protection. The lord saw his danger; but he thought far less of it than of keeping its sight from *her*. She struggled her face free, in spite of him, and looked up.

"We are on the precipice!" she shrieked. "Oh, Guy, we are on the precipice!"

"Hush, hush, child!" he implored with strained lips. "If Jeffs can keep them on the road, we are safe; they will stop at the hill. Don't scream, Alice, it may increase their terror. I think the storm is somewhat abating."

Her voice died away, and she remained quiet as a lamb, hiding her face upon his breast, and clasping him with a tight, nervous clasp: in that strong form, although she did not love it, there seemed to be protection: but she shook so, that she almost caused him to shake, betraying how excessive was her alarm. The storm, that had seemed to lull for a moment, raged again in its fury, and the horses raged in theirs; now kicking, now foaming, now rearing themselves bolt upright. Jeffs was flung from the box; and, in a second more, horses, carriage, and inmates had rolled down the precipice, on to the grass.

The fall had not been more than some few feet: had the horses gone further, it would have been much greater, for the hill gradually ascended to a height, where it overlooked the sea. The runners, their senseless shouts died away into horror-stricken silence, passed the dead body of Jeffs—dead it looked—and gazed over the side. Carriage and horses lay in a heap, an appalling mass; horses plunging, one of them shrieking. Did you ever hear the shriek of a wounded and frightened horse, reader? It is not pleasant to listen to.

Gaunt, the gamekeeper, came up first; he took out his knife and cut the traces. Two of the horses would never rise again; the other two dashed away in their freedom: and then the spectators climbed up and looked in at the carriage window, the carriage lying on its side.

"Get me out," said the Lord of Pomeroy.

He was not dead, at any rate: he was bruised and shaken, and there was a deep cut on his forehead: but his poor young bride lay senseless. "She has fainted from terror," said Guy, when she was extricated from the chariot; and he gently picked her up in his arms, her light weight being but as a feather in his great strength. So would he have borne her to the abbey.

"The lord had better not," interposed Gaunt, sensibly. "Should any bones be broken, it might do worse injury. Let a mattress be brought."

Guy Pomeroy sat down on the wet grass until the mattress should come, and held her upon him. Water was sprinkled over her face; some one suggested that her hands should be chafed; and the gloves were drawn off. Guy took the left hand in his. Alice was wearing

three or four rings. Guy drew them off, and dropped them into his waistcoat pocket.

But the rubbing and the water did not restore her to consciousness. The mattress was brought and she was borne to the abbey; and still she did not revive. Mr. Norris, the surgeon, entered it as they did; and he and Guy remained alone with her. She was placed upon a table, and the surgeon bent over her, touching her in various parts, touching her head and face, bending down his ear to her mouth and heart. A frightful, terrible fear stole suddenly into Guy's breast.

"She is not dead, is she?" he gasped, controlling his voice and face to calmness.

"Oh no, she is not dead," was Mr. Norris's reply. "But I fear there may be some slight concussion of the brain."

Meanwhile poor Jeffs had been brought into the abbey and was now seated upon a couch in the housekeeper's parlour. Beyond a few bruises on the left side, the side on which he fell, and sprained wrists and an aching shoulder, Jeffs had not sustained damage. He sat there now, being comforted with a liberal supply of some delicious cordial, and was holding forth to such of the servants as could spare time from the general confusion to gather around him. No ignominy like unto this had ever fallen upon Jeffs. To have been flung from the box when he was driving the Lord and Lady of Pomeroy home on their wedding-day, so that the horses had obtained their fling and brought on the catastrophe which had ensued, would be more than enough humiliation for his lifetime.

"I'd not ha' minded if they'd killed me, the brutes, so that I had drove the lord home all right first," he protested earnestly, in a voice that had a sound of tears in it. "And for two o' that matchless grey team to be done for, and me spared!"

"But don't your shoulder give you pain, Jeffs—and all the rest of your injuries?" cried Bridget, who was sure to be at the top and tail of every gathering—when it afforded an opportunity for gossip.

"Drat my shoulder!—and my injuries!" retorted Jeffs, with scant gallantry. "What's my injuries, put alongside o' that there pitch off the box—and of them there two sweet greys?"

"Well, I didn't mean to offend you," said Bridget soothingly, who never quarrelled with anybody. "I'm sure, Jeffs, when I saw you pass with those horses all rearing and prancing, my heart was in my mouth. You were pulling at them, and no mistake."

"Pulling!—look at my sprained wrists," cried Jeffs, holding out his unfortunate hands. "Did you ever see horses in such a fright afore?"

"No," said Bridget, "and I never wish to see it again. Tom Whittaker said they put him in mind of tigers."

"What right have Tom Whittaker to call my horses tigers?"

"I'm sure they were just as fierce as tigers," insisted Bridget, who liked to have the last word. "But there—take another sup, Jeffs, and comfort yourself; you'll be better to-morrow."

"My two greys won't be better," lamented Jeffs. "You'd not match that team in all the county for perfection and beauty. And for two of 'em to come to this untimely end! It'll be a'most the end of me. All through the wind! A blowing, and a roaring, and a driving round 'em like mad, it was. It all but whistled my state cocked-hat off."

Mr. Norris remained with the Lady of Pomeroy. They could not restore her to consciousness. Throughout the whole of the night, she did not revive; as the hours struck, one hour succeeding to the last, each found her in the same state. The doctor and the attendants waited round her bed, and Guy paced the rooms of the abbey, one room after another; now stealing in to the chamber and gazing on her, and now departing on his restless walk again.

And that was the ending of the Lord of Pomeroy's wedding-day.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE YOUNG LADY OF POMEROY.

A CONCUSSION of the brain it had proved to be, but not a dangerous one. Sooner than might have been expected, Mrs. Pomeroy grew better, was herself again, and progressing towards recovery.

Cautious nurses were Mrs. Wylde and Joan; could attention have cured Alice, she had been well forthwith. Guy had been excluded from the room. Guy rebelled: he thought he could make as good a nurse as the best of them. Neither would they allow her to speak, until she would be quiet no longer.

"How long have I lain here?" at length asked she of Mrs. Wylde.

"Eight days, my dear."

"This is a strange room. Is it the abbey?"

"Of course it is. It is your own room in it."

"I was married, was I not?" continued Mrs. Pomeroy.

"Why, don't you remember it?" returned her mother.

"Yes, I remember it. I lay and thought things over yesterday: and I remember the awful day—and oh, mother!" shuddering, "I remember the drive home. I remember the furious horses, and Guy holding me. Did we fall over the precipice?"

"Only at the lower part of it. The accident was a sad one," added Mrs. Wylde, "but do not recur to it now, Alice; no lives were lost. Jeffs was thought to be badly hurt at the time; but he is better. Quite well, indeed."

Mrs. Pomeroy raised herself in bed, sitting up and looking eagerly at her mother. "Did it kill Guy?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Good gracious, no, child! Don't frighten yourself with these imaginative fancies. Lie down. The Lord of Pomeroy was not hurt—to speak of." Had it been to save her credit, Mrs. Wylde could not have helped giving Guy Pomeroy this title upon every possible occasion: the charm it bore for her ears was beyond telling. She never called him Mr. Pomeroy: though that is what he was, in spite of the title personally accorded him. "Your beautiful white dress is the worst off: its skirts lay in the wet and muddy grass: I'll leave you to judge the state it was in. And the wreath was crushed, and the veil torn. Now, don't talk any more."

There was a few minutes' pause, and then the invalid began again. Her hands were raised before her, and she appeared to be looking at them. "If I am married, where's my wedding ring?"

"Now, Alice, how can you talk so nonsensically? 'If I am married'! You must be putting it on. Don't you remember?"

"I suppose I do," sighed Alice. "Where is my wedding-ring?"

"The Lord of Pomeroy has it."

"Did Guy——"

"I will not have you talk any more," interrupted Mrs. Wylde. "Here you are talking as if you were doing it for a wager. Wait until you are stronger."

"If I did not feel equal to it, I should not talk, mamma. My head feels a little light, that is all. I must talk; it amuses me; and I am sure there's no reason why I should not."

"At any rate, Alice, there's a slight flush on your face. Lie still for a little while, and then you may talk again."

She quitted the room. Alice, compelled to silence, lay and thought; her mind very busy. By-and-by Miss Pomeroy entered.

"Joan, come here," she said; "sit down close to me. What a shocking accident this has been!"

"It has," replied Joan, drawing a chair forward. "But you are getting better, therefore——"

"Joan, I want to ask you something—and now you answer me the truth; what you think, and whether I am not right. It was an awful day: such a day, I should think, as has never been known, here or anywhere, and it was an awful accident: and the days previous to it were calm and beautiful, and I daresay the days subsequent have been so. Have they?"

"Yes," replied Joan, unsuspicious of her young sister-in-law's drift. "The day following the accident arose bright and lovely as the days previous had been; bearing no trace, save in the wet ground and the damaged crops, of the angry day that had intervened."

"Well, now, Joan, should you not say that it was an omen of evil for me and Guy?"

Joan would not answer. Given to superstition, as were all the

Pomeroys—the very abbey itself, with its tales and its gloom, was enough to embue them with it—she had been deducing augury of ill to her brother and his wife from the strange day and the accident it had led to; but she had kept the feeling within her own breast. Others were not so silent; and Guy had been nearly driven savage by the evil prognostications whispered around him.

"You don't speak, Joan: you will not speak: and I know what that means. Here's mamma again!"

"Alice, the Lord of Pomeroy is coming in to pay you a visit."

Alice rose up in bed, startled; and looked at her mother.

"The Lord of Pomeroy! Here!"

"Yes. He is waiting now. He waylaid me in the corridor to say so."

Mrs. Pomeroy turned crimson to the roots of her hair. "I cannot see him here; in bed! He must wait until I am up and in my dressing-room: that will be in a day or two."

"Nonsense," returned Mrs. Wylde. "He is your husband, remember. We will dress you up in a shawl and a pretty cap, to look smart for the visit. Don't be fastidious."

"I *won't* see him, then," said Mrs. Pomeroy.

"How very ridiculous! he will not eat you. Why, he wanted to make one of your nurses, Alice."

Mrs. Pomeroy looked red and very indignant. "I am astonished at you, mamma!"

"I am astonished at you," returned Mrs. Wylde. "He has a *right* to see you, and he will exercise it. I can tell you, Alice, he is not pleased at having been kept out of your room, like a stranger; it has tried his temper and his feelings: but Mr. Norris and Dr. Bell said so much about your not being excited, that he yielded to them, and contented himself with taking a peep at you through the open door now and then."

"It is unreasonable," pouted Alice.

"You must be unreasonable yourself to say so," retorted Mrs. Wylde. "But I will leave your husband to settle that with you. To tell you the truth, I knew he was coming in to-day, and that's why I did not want you to fatigue yourself with talking beforehand."

Alice looked round at Joan. She was standing with compressed lips and severe expression: displeased, at least so Alice interpreted it, to hear this objection raised to a simple and, what might be called, a ceremonious visit. Guy determined, her mother determined, and Joan angry!——Alice began to think that she might as well give in.

The Lord of Pomeroy entered; and Mrs. Wylde and Joan closed the door upon him. Alice lay, well covered up; her pretty face, made "smart" in its pretty cap, nearly buried in the pillow. Guy bent down to kiss her—which was very natural.

"Oh, don't, please," cried Alice, pushing him back with her hand, and turning her face away; "my head is not strong yet, and must not be touched." But the Lord of Pomeroy was her husband now,

and chose to judge for himself: and he turned her face back again and took the kiss; another and yet another, but in all gentleness. He would be far more careful of her than she was of herself. Then he sat down, spoke a little of the intense anxiety her illness had caused him, and of his deep gratitude to Him, who is the giver of all good, for her, so far, recovery. In these quiet moments, all the gentleness in his nature in full exercise, none could help liking the Lord of Pomeroy.

Alice heard him pretty patiently. But he had hardly finished when she began to speak somewhat eagerly.

"Guy."

"What, my dearest?"

"I want you to listen to me; I am going to say something that I have been thinking of yesterday and to-day. I never was superstitious, Guy; but it is impossible to look upon what has happened without some such kind of feeling intruding."

"The accident will have no lasting consequences," interrupted Guy Pomeroy, possibly doomed, as it appeared, to hear reiterated by his bride the same song he had been obliged to hear from others.

"The accident was awful," she rejoined, with a shudder. "Oh, Guy! I never shall forget the terror I felt at the snorting and flying horses. How could you maintain your presence of mind?"

"I had you with me."

"But I look not so much at the accident itself, as at the strange wild day," she resumed. "The weather has never been like that. We have had summer storms, terrific storms, fatal to property and to life, but they have come on naturally, Guy, and have cleared again after they had spent themselves. But that strange day was unnatural."

"It was uncommon," said the Lord of Pomeroy.

"Guy, it was unnatural. It seemed to be sent as a warning to us."

"A warning to us?"

"Yes. Not to enter into our union: the very heavens lowered their displeasure upon it."

"Alice! Who has been putting these notions into your head?"

"Not anyone," she answered. "Mamma and Joan have kept me silent, not allowing me to speak, or speaking to me. I could not shut my eyes to the weather, Guy. I told Joan, just now, that it was a bad omen for you and for me, but she would not answer me."

"Joan was right."

"Perhaps so—but I know what she thinks. You are a man, Guy, and therefore will pretend to despise these fears; perhaps you do despise them: but, rely upon it, that strange day was sent to portend ill to us, if ever ill was portended yet."

"Then, my dear, we will ward off the ill together. I will ward all ill from you, heaven helping me."

"We can ward it off in one way," said Alice: "it is the only way left to us."

"Well?" returned Guy, smiling.

"By never being more to each other than we are now," she whispered: "by getting the marriage annulled."

"What!" uttered Guy, a frown of mingled pain and astonishment displacing the smile upon his face.

"It could be done, Guy. And then we may laugh at the past storm, and have no fears."

"Your head must be still light from fever, Alice!"

She put out her left hand and clasped his arm. "Do not let us tempt Fate, Guy. That day was as surely an omen of ill upon our union; as sure—as sure as anything can be in this world. And in what other light could the accident to me be regarded, but as an awful, interposed veto against my entering the abbey as its mistress?"

Guy had taken her left hand to hold between his, and was playing with her fingers. "It should have come sooner, then, if it had that intention," said he, gaily. "Do you see this?"

He held up her hand, so that she might see it: he had slipped on her wedding-ring. Alice strove to draw her hand away.

"Had Fate—as you call it—wished to interpose her veto upon your entering the abbey, she should have been rather more prompt, and not have waited until you were my wife."

"To treat it in that mocking way, Guy, is——wicked."

"Nay, my dear, I say nothing but the truth. If Fate, human or hobgoblin, owed us a grudge and set herself to scowl upon our marriage, she should not have been quite so dilatory. The interposition should have come before you quitted your mother's house and your mother's name."

"It is not too late, Guy: it may be managed. When I am well enough to be moved I can go back home with my mother."

Guy did his best to keep his anger within bounds. "Alice, you talk like a child. After having married me, come home to me, stopped with me, you think you could go back from it all, and become Alice Wylde again! What would the world say of you? Nothing laudable, I ween."

"You are cruel," was her tearful response. "I thought the Lord of Pomercy deemed himself a gentleman."

"I hope he is one. But he is your husband."

"The marriage can be easily broken," she resumed, "for the Pomeroy influence is great at Rome: and you know, Guy, my heart never was in it. You shall wed a better wife, and I will be Alice Wylde again."

One of the haughty Pomeroy scowls came over the lord's face. "That you may seek, and wed, the renegade Rupert—who won your heart with his false vows, and carried its tales of credulity to amuse his real idol! who—who ——"

Guy paused: his temper had overmastered him, but his senses were

returning: in a calmer moment he would have bitten out his tongue, rather than have so taunted her, now she was his wife. He had never thought to speak the name of Rupert to her again: he wished it to be equally shunned by the one as by the other.

"You are generous!" she returned, speaking with scorn to keep down the tears. "Were I free as air, and Rupert Pomeroy came to me in his soul's repentance, pleading for love and pardon, I would trample him under foot, rather than listen. Had I a hope now to give to Rupert, I should never have consented to marry you."

The Lord of Pomeroy rose; his passion had changed to calmness. "I beg your pardon," he softly whispered: "in this interview we have each something to forgive the other. You should not so have spoken, Alice: my wife you have been made by your own vows, and my wife you are. Anyone less ignorant of the ways of the world than you are, would never have thought of such a thing."

She burst into tears. "I am sure they all think we shall have dreadful luck."

"Oh, child, do not speak so. Not if I can shield you from it. Dry your tears. And when I come in again, my dearest, meet me as a friend; not as a foe."

He bent down and kissed her face, as he had done at entering, and quitted the room. Mrs. Wylde came into it, but Alice motioned her away, and said she was going to sleep: so she was left alone.

Droll sleep it was: a prolonged fit of sobs and tears. But Guy had left upon her hand the wedding-ring: a sure earnest that she could not go from him.

Mrs. Wylde caught just the two first syllables of the word, separation, and was for applying a couple of blisters behind her daughter's ears, really believing her brain to be affected; she told her she deserved a good shaking for even imagining so great a scandal. Alice contrived to spin out the "getting well" to what Guy thought an interminable period. At length, Mrs. Wylde quitted the abbey, leaving a good private scolding for Alice behind her; and Alice assumed her proper station as the abbey's mistress.

And then Guy filled it with the guests that had been expecting to come ever since the wedding. Feasting was the order of the day; gaiety reigned; dinners, drives, dressing, and vanity. In the midst of this, all so dear to her pleasure-loving heart, Alice was forgetting her fears of evil; and if she was not precisely in the seventh heaven of happiness as the wife of Guy, she was certainly not miserable. She loved gaiety; and the deference paid her, both as a bride and as the Lady of Pomeroy, turned her head with pleasure. The women envied, the men admired, Guy loved; and Alice Pomeroy's life was as one long dream of indulged vanity.

"Which is best, Lady of Pomeroy," Guy said to her one day, laughingly: "to reign here the abbey's mistress and my idolized wife, or to have gone back home again to be Alice Wylde?"

"I was ill and weak, dear Guy," she pleaded, "and the storm had so frightened me. I am glad to be here."

"You shall always be glad, my dearest, if it depend on me," whispered Guy. And Alice turned to him with a loving look, and a loving word. She had resolutely set herself to overcome the distaste she once felt for him, and she was succeeding.

"Joan," spoke the Honourable Mrs. Capel one day when the two sisters were together in the garden, "I do not like our new sister-in-law."

"No?" said Joan.

"Not at all. Do you?"

The question was pointedly put. In her heart of hearts, Joan did not like Alice Pomeroy, had never been able (in spite of her efforts) to bring herself to like her when she was Alice Wylde. But Joan was all for peace, for making the best of things, and therefore felt very unwilling to confess as much, even in confidence.

"And I wonder at Guy's infatuation," added Mrs. Capel.

The two sisters presented a contrast in looks. Isabel lively and beautiful; Joan grave of manner, hard of feature, and too tall for a woman. The one liked dress; the other shunned it. Look at them to-day: Isabel wears a delicate silk (too costly for her purse) that gleams and changes in the sun; Joan has on some delectable thick dull material of the sober colour she favours—dark purple.

"Why do you not like her, Isabel?"

"Because I don't," laughed Mrs. Capel. "If that's not a sufficient reason, Joan, I hardly know that I can give another. There's something about her that jars against me: something that tells me she is not truthful; and certainly she is not a lady at heart."

"But, Isabel ——"

"Well?"

"Alice *is* his wife: and though we may not like her as well as we could wish, only one thing remains—to make the best of it."

"Quite right—especially for you who will see more of her than I shall. My dear Joan, had he married a negress you would have said, Make the best of it."

"I daresay we shall like her in time—when she has shaken down into her place, and ——"

"Become less assumptious, you would say. Is that a right word? Anyway, you know what I mean. She is eaten up with vanity: as her mother is with pretension. I don't believe the woman has ever before mixed with people of degree. But there—you need not knit your brow, Joan; all the talking in the world will not undo the marriage, so we'll just leave it. Guy has chosen the girl with his eyes open; and I hope with all my heart she will make him happy. But now, Joan, where is Sybilla Gaunt?"

Miss Pomeroy shook her head. She wished she knew.

"Can it be true that she lost her head?"

"Yes. Unfortunately."

"Well, I don't believe it."

"*There's no room to doubt, Isabel;* I tell it you: and I would almost as soon have had to tell it of myself."

"Where's Rupert?" resumed Mrs. Capel sharply.

"In London—and in some trouble, I fear."

"Debt, of course. It will always be so with Rupert. But—is it true that he and Sybilla left together?"

"No."

"What does Guy say to it all?"

"Nothing. He will not allow the subject to be mentioned. I can see that, from some cause or other, his heart is waging war with Rupert."

"I have no patience with Rupert. He is too thoughtless; he does not care what scrapes he gets into. I suppose you know that George's regiment is ordered to India. Dear George! I should so much like to have seen him. He is the best of them all, Joan."

Joan did not answer. She loved her brother George dearly, and was grieved that he should be going away for years. Her eyes seemed to have a far-off look in them, as they gazed at the narrow strip of blue sky seen above the high enclosing walls of the shrubbery, just as though she could see India up there.

"Guy is cold and domineering, Rupert fonder of the world than of home, Leolin just the least bit in the world selfish," went on Mrs. Capel, summing up the virtues of her brothers; "but George is good and winsome. And yet, he is the one that must go away from us over the seas!"

"It is ever thus, I think," said Joan. "Any pleasure we particularly wish for in this life is sure to be marred. George is the one we would have liked to keep near us, and George is the one to go."

On this same morning, it chanced that Alice Pomeroy with two of her younger guests was in her own special sitting-room; one that Guy had re-decorated so charmingly, just before the marriage, for his expected bride. Alice did not like dull and gloomy rooms, she said; so, to please her, he made this into a modern one. It was vastly pretty, no doubt; with its pink silk hangings, its mirrors and its nick-nacks; and it pleased Alice's eye: but it was sadly out of keeping with the grand and sombre old abbey.

Lady Lucy Hetley, a pretty girl, daughter of the Earl of Essington, sat on the music stool, talking and playing by turns; Miss Peters was standing at the window, some embroidery in her hand; and Alice lay back at ease in a costly arm chair slightly swaying one foot about, and doing nothing.

"Why don't you show us your wedding dress, Mrs. Pomeroy?" asked Lady Lucy, the conversation having turned to that all-important article in a young lady's eyes.

"I will if you like. Come into my dressing-room," added Alice. "I suppose it must be somewhere here," she remarked, opening drawers and wardrobes; "but I declare I've never thought of the dress since my wedding-day. I fancy mamma said something about its having been hurt by the wet."

"No wonder you have not thought of it—with such a termination as the day had," said Mary Peters. "I think I should have died of fright in the carriage."

"Oh, you can't imagine what it was!" returned Alice, slightly shuddering. "What with the dreadful storm and the furious horses, I—I don't know how I lived through it. Guy turned my face down upon him and kept it there, so that I should not see. But for him I should have jumped out of the carriage. I have wondered since that Guy could have been so calm himself. But now—where can my dress be?—where have they put it? I must ring for Theresa."

Theresa came in, quiet-looking as usual, in her close cap and neat grey gown. When asked about the wedding-dress, she said it was in the large wardrobe closet near the end of the wing. At this news, away went the three young ladies to the closet, and Mrs. Pomeroy threw open the door.

It was hanging just in front of them as they entered: the once beautiful dress of rich white silk with its costly white lace flounces, now shrunken, muddy, and yellow with the wet and dirt. The young ladies stood contemplating it with dismayed faces.

"What a sad pity!" breathed Miss Peters.

"But the flounces do not seem torn; at least, they are not on this side," observed Lady Lucy. "They might be cleaned and renovated."

She turned the skirt slightly, and bent forward to look further. Something must have startled her, for she dropped it suddenly and drew back with a faint scream.

"It is covered with blood," she shuddered, turning her pale face towards Mrs. Pomeroy.

"With blood!"

"A long stream, from the top to the flounces. I—I don't like to see blood."

Curiosity, even to look at disagreeable sights, is irrepressible, and both Mrs. Pomeroy and Mary Peters pressed forward. It was as Lucy Hetley said: a long, dark, ugly stain. They shut the closet door in trepidation, almost as though they were shutting in a ghost, turned the key, and hastened back to the dressing-room.

"I can't account for it—for what should bring that mark there; I cannot understand it one bit," spoke Alice Pomeroy from the low chair on which she had sunk down.

"You must have been wounded."

"But I was not. Nothing was hurt but my head, and that did not bleed. It must have come on the dress in the closet."

This sounded so very ghostly a suggestion, carrying them back to

the times of Mrs. Radcliffe and all kinds of unearthly thoughts, that they drew together, although it was broad daylight. The young Lady of Pomeroy was feeling somewhat uncomfortable. Dormant in her heart, lay the seeds of a superstition that might be nourished in time to be formidable.

"Do you know anything about the stain on my dress, Theresa?" she lifted her head to ask.

"My lady, no."

Mrs. Pomeroy impulsively ran off in search of her husband. He was alone in the library, writing a letter. Alice went behind his chair, and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Guy, how did that—that frightful stain come upon my bridal dress? Do you know?"

Guy laid down his pen, and drew the hand to him with a caressing movement. "What stain, my darling?"

"Of blood," she whispered. "A long, frightful stain all down it. The dress is altogether spoiled."

"Won't it wash?"

"Wash!" she exclaimed, amazed at the ignorance of mankind. "But we can't think where it came from, Guy. I was not wounded."

"I was," replied Guy. He pushed aside the hair from his right temple and exhibited a mark that he would retain for life.

"That is where it came from, Alice. As I held you on the bank, the blood ran down upon your dress without my observing it."

She heaved a sigh of relief. "Oh yes, that's how it was, then. We have been thinking it must have got on mysteriously in the closet. Such things have been heard of, you know, Guy. The old story-books are full of them."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Guy laughing. "Never mind your spoiled dress, love: we will buy you another."

"Ah, Guy—you can't buy me another wedding-dress," she answered, a strange mournfulness in her tone. "And it is a sad pity that that stain should have come upon it: all things bode ill luck together."

"You foolish girl: you silly, silly child," he uttered fondly. "My coat came off the worst. As to ill luck—you are a Pomeroy now. And ill luck is a thing we don't think about, we Pomeroys."

CHAPTER IX.

THE PREDICTION.

THE marriage festivities came to an end; the guests departed, and the young Lady of Pomeroy was alone.

She did not like to be alone. She liked show and state and glitter and vanity. The abbey had been filled with these desirable acquisitions when she married Guy Pomeroy: in fact, it may with

justice be said that she married him to obtain them. It was all very well to be the Lady of Pomeroy; to be conscious that she filled that exalted position in the county; to be called "my lady" by the servants more often than "madam;" very gratifying indeed, all this, to her vain heart; but she craved for something more.

Guy was to have taken his wife to town when the festivities were over, that she might be presented at the late drawing-room in June. To be presented at court seemed to Alice Wylde one of the few great and desirable and unattainable ends of this life; for we are writing of many years ago, when it was not the custom for every Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Brown to intrude there. Of all the honours she would drop into by the marriage, that was looked upon as the chiefest; and it was the one she most ardently hungered for.

But now—see how fate and fortune cheat us! Any thing so intensely coveted as Alice coveted that, is, all too often, never realised. Some adverse cross or other is sure to step in and frustrate it. In this case it was the illness arising from the accident on the wedding-day. Long before the guests had come and gone after her recovery, the Queen's drawing-rooms were over. Alice perforce stayed where she was, and made the best of Pomeroy Abbey. But, as the time went on, she found it insufferably dull.

Take to-day as a specimen. It is rather a gloomy day in November, just on a par with the gloomy abbey itself, and Alice feels bored to death. Guy went out shooting with early morning; he may come in to luncheon, or he may not; there's no telling; and Alice sits at the window and looks out on the dreary landscape—dreary it ever seems to her. She is dressed to perfection: a gown of soft grey cachemere, trimmed very much with pink silk, and a coquettish cap of pink ribbon and white lace upon her pretty hair. But where's the use of being dressed to perfection when no admiring eyes are near to view it?—the question rang grumblingly through Alice's thoughts rather too often. She is not reading; she is not working. The latter she detests; the former also—unless, indeed, it be a foolish novel, one of those poor and silly ones that a mind of ordinary intellect can hardly bear to read. In dressing, flirting, and vapid speech she was an adept; but these will not carry a woman happily through life. Alice's intellect was, in truth, not of the highest order: but Guy had not yet found it out. That he would discover it fast enough in time, was to be supposed; for he was clever himself, and she could never be a companion to him. Now and then he did already think her rather silly.

"Why can't they address me as Lady Pomeroy?" she said to him one day in a fractious tone, upon receiving a note whose superscription did not please her.

"Because you are not Lady Pomeroy, Alice. You are Mrs. Pomeroy."

"You are addressed as the Lord of Pomeroy?"

"I am always so addressed in writing. You may be addressed as the Lady of Pomeroy, or as Mrs. Pomeroy—as people please."

"Then I don't like to be addressed as Mrs. Pomeroy," pouted Alice. "I ought to be Lady Pomeroy."

"Don't be silly, child," said Guy, slightly knitting his brow. "The title is personally accorded me in courtesy and from long-established usage; it does not confer any benefit upon those connected with me."

This was not a solitary instance—but others need not be mentioned. And we return to Alice, seated in her salon on the dark November day.

"Oh, dear!" she cried, with a prolonged yawn, "how dull everything is!"

For the past two or three weeks, Mrs. Pomeroy had not felt well, which tended to increase her lassitude. When she complained, her mother, and all the gossips who dared, told her she must be patient; her indisposition was only what might be expected. But there sits Alice to-day, feeling out of sorts, dreary, dull, and with nothing in the world to do.

"Theresa," she called out, as a footstep passed the half-open door.

But it was the housekeeper who looked in. "It is not Theresa," she said. "Does the lady require anything that I can do for her?"

"Where is Theresa?"

"She is gone over to the White House, my lady."

"What a long time she stays there! She ought to have been back ever so long ago. No, I don't want anything. Send Theresa in when she does come."

Mrs. Rex met Theresa in the corridor. "Your lady is asking for you," she said to her. "Go in at once, for she seems impatient."

"My lady always is impatient now," thought Theresa. "I suppose I may take off my bonnet first."

"Well, what news have you?" began Alice, sharply, as the maid appeared. "How is mamma?"

"She is quite well, madam, and sends her love to you. As to news, I have not brought any."

"Did you get the bracelet?"

"No, madam, and they can't find it anywhere. Mrs. Wylde thinks you must have dropped it on getting into the carriage, or on getting out of it. She says she saw it on your arm when the lord was putting on your opera cloak in the hall."

The previous evening, Alice and Guy had dined with Mrs. Wylde. After her return home, when undressing, Alice missed one of her bracelets. It was a band of filigree gold, the clasp set with pearls. After breakfast this morning, she had dispatched Theresa to the White House, believing she must have left it there.

"Mamma says she saw it on my arm when my cloak was being put on, does she? I daresay I dropped it in the hall. I daresay they have not half looked."

"Indeed, my lady, we looked well; looked in every crick and corner of it."

"Well, you must find it, Theresa. If it's not there it must be elsewhere."

"I would be too glad to find it, madam," heartily responded Theresa; "though I'm sure I don't know where to look. The lord said just now ——"

"Have you seen the lord?" interrupted Alice.

"He was crossing the upper field with Mr. Gaunt and the two keepers, just as I left the White House," explained Theresa. "I told him that the bracelet was not found, and he said it had recurred to his memory that in coming home last night, you put your arm out of the carriage window to feel whether it still rained. He thinks it may have dropped off then."

"Did I," said Alice; "I'm sure I forget. If it did drop off then, some thief may have picked it up."

"And the lord desired me to say that he should not be in to luncheon, madam," added Theresa, as she withdrew. "They were going to have some at the upper covers."

The Lady of Pomeroy sat on again, yawning and sighing and looking at the dreary landscape till lunch time. That meal, taken for form's sake, for her appetite was not as good as it used to be, she returned to her place in the morning-room, and yawned through the afternoon, done to death nearly with ennui, at the lack of something to do. She had no resources within herself; she seemed to have no object to live for.

Towards dusk the lost bracelet was brought in. One of the village labourers, going forth in the morning to his day's work, had picked it up in the highway: dropped there no doubt when she had put her arm out of the carriage the previous evening.

And thus the time, the days and the weeks, interspersed with a little receiving and visiting, contrived to pass for Mrs. Pomeroy. The visiting might have been more extensive, but that somehow or other she was not so popular as she might have been. Whether it was that the old county families resented her want of birth and regarded her as somewhat of an interloper amongst them; or whether it was herself they did not like, certain it was, that Alice was not courted so much as one might have expected the Lord of Pomeroy's wife to be.

The winter passed, spring followed, and summer came round again. There is little of event to tell that could interest the reader. Alice was in delicate health; her presentation at court had again to be postponed. Visiting abroad and entertaining guests at home had alike to be given up by her, for she could do nothing but nurse herself and her sickness. But Guy was in a wondrous flow of spirits, for there was expected an heir to Pomeroy.

One evening in June, when Guy was dining out, Alice, after her own dinner, went into the oak room, which faced the quadrangle.

The sun was setting in a sky of crimson and gold: Alice could see the brightness over the opposite side of the abbey—the west wing. It has been already said that the front pile and the north pile were alone inhabited. The south wing was habitable so far as furniture went: the west wing was not habitable, and had the reputation of being haunted. Sitting there alone, Mrs. Pomeroy's thoughts wandered to the vast extent of the abbey—and what an army of servants it must have taken to fill it when fully inhabited in the days gone by. She remembered a boast she had once made—that should she ever be the abbey's mistress, she would cause it to be renovated, so that the county should not know it again. Opposite to her was the west wing, and those rooms she had never seen. A sudden inclination came over her to look at them now, this very evening. More than once she had asked Guy to take her over those rooms; he always answered that he would on the first opportunity—but somehow the opportunity had never come. One grave request he had made to her; nay it was a command—*that she would not attempt to go up without him.* This came into her mind now.

"As if it could signify," decided Alice at last, after pondering the matter a minute or two. "Guy's only afraid I should hurt myself, going up those narrow stairs. Yes, I will go; and old Jerome must attend me with the keys."

Jerome, summoned by his lady to show her over the west wing, appeared in a state of intense astonishment, holding in his hand a huge bunch of keys. He was custodian of the abbey.

"Had not the lady better defer her visit till the morrow?" asked Jerome. "It will soon be dark."

"Not at all, Jerome; I am going now," answered Mrs. Pomeroy.

They proceeded through the cloisters of the north wing, to the north tower. Jerome fumbled over his keys; and, unlocking the door, they ascended the narrow staircase of the tower, Mrs. Pomeroy folding her skirts closely around her, and from thence passed into the west wing. Peering about her in the dim light, Mrs. Pomeroy saw, as she and Jerome passed through the rooms, that they yet bore some scant remains of furniture, though the hangings were dropping to pieces. When they came to the last room—Jerome called it so—Mrs. Pomeroy detected a small door at its end covered with tapestry.

"Jerome," she exclaimed, "this must lead into the west tower."

The old man had turned to one of the windows, and was looking steadfastly down into the court. Mrs. Pomeroy repeated her remark. "This door, Jerome. Open it."

"That room is never entered," he replied.

"Never entered!" returned Mrs. Pomeroy. "Why not? I shall enter it."

"I have not the key," returned Jerome.

"Where is it, then?"

Jerome hesitated. "Maybe—maybe the lord keeps it. That's the haunted room, madam."

Mrs. Pomeroy had heard of the haunted room, both before she entered the abbey and since. Not being so much of a believer in immaterial bodies as she was in weather-signs and such-like omens, she became possessed with a strong desire to explore it.

"Has the lady never heard that apparitions have been seen there?" returned Jerome, in a tone of awe.

"Apparitions don't come before the sun has set," promptly replied the Lady of Pomeroy. "You go back, Jerome, and hunt among all that heap of keys in that key closet of yours, and find the right one."

Jerome had no power to say he would not go. He turned unwillingly, and attempted to take the bunch of keys which hung to the lock; the lock of the room they were in. No: try as he would, he could not take it out: the key that he had himself put into the lock adhered to it.

"You do not want those keys to find the other key," said Mrs. Pomeroy. "Leave them where they are."

"I think this key will only come out when the door's closed and locked," muttered Jerome, trying ineffectually still.

He went away at length. Mrs. Pomeroy, as much to pass the time as anything, touched the keys, and out they came. "What a curious thing that Jerome could not do it!" thought she. "They seemed to fall into my hand. That old man must be getting stupid."

She held them, and read their labels, which indicated the particular room each belonged to. On one, however, was simply written "The Key." "The key?" debated Mrs. Pomeroy, "that must be the key of the haunted room, I should think. I'll try it."

She drew aside the hangings, inserted it in the lock, and, with a harsh, grating sound, the door flew open, the wind and the dust blowing unpleasantly in the face of Mrs. Pomeroy.

She shrank back. Her courage failed. By daylight or by dark, it is not pleasant to a mind where any superstition exists to enter alone a "haunted" room. Mrs. Pomeroy went back to the casement and stood looking into the court. There she saw Bridget: obeying an impulse, she pulled open, with some trouble, the casement, trellised with its small panes, and signed to her to come up. Bridget looked thunderstruck at seeing her lady there, but obeyed the signal: came through the north cloisters, ascended the stairs of the north tower, passed through the west rooms, and joined her.

"Hold these hangings back for me," said Mrs. Pomeroy. "They are nothing but a cloud of dust."

The woman obeyed, but with a wondering gesture. "Does the Lady of Pomeroy know what this room is?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Pomeroy, passing in. "Come with me, Bridget."

It was a small, circular room, panelled with dark mahogany. A

narrow casement faced the quadrangle; but, like the other rooms, there was no look-out to the opposite side, the open country. The room was completely furnished with velvet that had once been red, but was now dark with age; chairs, a broad couch or settle, and a centre table, all were covered and hung with the velvet, which appeared to be dropping away. Mrs. Pomeroy saw no signs of haunting apparitions: all that struck her, was the smallness of the room. She remarked upon it.

"The tower walls are thick, madam."

"What is that?" she asked, as her eye became accustomed to the dark walls. "Why, that is a cloth, a velvet cloth, drawn over one of the panels."

"The picture is underneath," whispered Bridget, in an awe-struck tone—for she had her superstitions, like the rest of them.

"What picture is underneath?"

"The nun's, madam. She who was said to haunt the room. Would the lady like to look at it?"

Mrs. Pomeroy signified her assent. Bridget caught up the velvet and held it aside, disclosing a half-length figure, habited as a nun. The face was young, fair, and most lovely; but a strangely mournful and stern expression sat in the dark blue eyes, which were fixed full on the spectator. The lips were slightly open, and one delicate hand was held up in a warning attitude.

"She is saying 'Beware,'" whispered Bridget, who appeared to be afraid of the picture hearing her.

Mrs. Pomeroy laughed. "I do not hear her," she answered; "but fancy goes a great way. Beware of what?"

"It is what she is supposed to be saying, madam, according to the tradition. But why, or to whom she is saying it, has never been decided."

"What is her history?"

"She lived in the reign of one of the Georges—the first or second, I think," began Bridget, delighted at having to tell the tale. "She was brought up in the convent and had taken the veil, though only seventeen; when in some way she fell in with him who was then Lord of Pomeroy. It was said to be in the fire, for the convent was partly burnt down, and the nuns had to escape in the night."

"Was it this convent?—our convent?" interrupted Mrs. Pomeroy. "That we can see from here?"

"Yes, madam, this very convent. Though nigh upon a hundred years must have elapsed, the sisters there will tell you tales now that have come down to them of that trying misfortune. This young nun forgot her vows, madam, and ran away with the Lord of Pomeroy, to be his wife. He married her in secret, and he brought her to these rooms in the west wing; this tower room being hers. The lord doted on her, it is said, and he had this picture taken of her in her convent dress, and hung up here: but, when it was too late,

she found out he had played her false, for he had a wife already, that he was separated from. She went crazed, poor thing, all in one night, and she threw herself out of this very window, and was taken up dead in the court below."

Mrs. Pomeroy looked at the window. "She never could have got through that narrow half casement, Bridget. The other half does not open."

"It is certain that she did, madam: she was young and slight. For years afterwards, during that lord's lifetime, she was seen at this same window on a moonlight night—the moon often shines full on these west tower windows: the lady knows they face the east—her light hair hanging over her neck, and wringing her hands, as it is said she did wring them, before she leaped out. But after the lord died, she never came again—as some say. Others say she did come, and does: my old aunt Naomi for one."

"How is it you are so well acquainted with these old histories?" questioned Mrs. Pomeroy.

"Why, madam, I have known them all my life—at least, since I grew old enough to be trusted. We Rexes know as much of the abbey's secrets and sayings as there is to know."

Perhaps Bridget was a little mistaken there. Mrs. Pomeroy accepted it for truth. She was becoming greatly interested in the story of the poor young nun.

"The prediction is there," resumed Bridget, pointing to the picture. "But you can hardly see it, I think, madam: not to read it. This room is dark in the after part of the day, because the sun goes behind the tower: and it must be set now."

"The prediction?" repeated Mrs. Pomeroy.

"It is the strangest part of the history," continued Bridget. "On the morrow following the accident, when she was lying dead, poor lady, in this very room, the lord saw some lines written on the picture, close to the hand which she is holding up. It was never known who wrote them; some people thought she did, before she took the leap; but the lord knew that the characters were not hers, and they came to be regarded as having been done by supernatural agency. In the earlier part of a bright day they can be read without a light, but not when the room's in the shade. Some few thought they applied to what the lord had done; but it is mostly held and believed that they are to affect a later Pomeroy."

"And what are they?"

"They betoken woe to the house," answered Bridget. "It is to be hoped they'll not be realized for many a generation."

Mrs. Pomeroy had put her face and eyes close to the picture, endeavouring to decipher the lines. But she was unable to do so, though she could discern that some were there.

"The late lord—the one who had done the wrong was his grandfather—put little faith in all this, and I have heard him laugh over

it," re-commenced Bridget; whose tongue, once set going on these topics, would never have ceased of its own accord. "He did not keep the room or the wing shut up, and any of the family could come in who liked, and we had to dust and clean here once or twice a year. He was a rare one for disliking dust and dirt. But ——"

"Stay a moment, Bridget. In saying the late lord, do you mean him who died last?"

"Surely yes, madam. But as I was going to add, the present lord had the whole wing shut up as soon as he came into power. The Pomeroys are a proud race, the present lord especially is, and they deem the picture a memento of disgrace; a blot on the scutcheon of their ancestors. So the lord keeps the curtain down over it—*that* the bad lord had put—as his father did before him; and in addition he keeps the room shut and locked, and all the west wing besides."

"But it is going a roundabout way to attain his end," remarked Mrs. Pomeroy. "Why not destroy the picture, and have done with it?—and have the rooms thrown open and embellished. I shall suggest it to the lord."

Bridget shook her head. "Not a Pomeroy dare destroy that picture. An impression has passed down from father to son, since the time of the sinning lord—that whoever does away with the picture, must look out for the cost, for that the fulfilment of the prediction will then be at hand. Whether my lord puts faith in it, madam, I can't say; likely not, for he is one of the boldest of a bold race: but, anyway, he takes care to keep the picture hidden so that no harm can approach it."

"I wish I could see the prediction," cried curious Mrs. Pomeroy, not feeling altogether pleased that Guy should have kept her in the dark as to these matters, have withheld this delightfully marvellous story from her. "Suppose you fetch a candle, Bridget?"

"Will the lady like to remain here alone?" hesitated the servant, halting at the threshold.

The Lady of Pomeroy settled that by motioning the woman to hold back the hangings, and stepping down into the next room. There she took up her station at the open window, and leaned from it, that the evening air might be company until Bridget's return.

As Bridget was going down the stairs of the north tower she met Jerome. "Where do you spring from?" he exclaimed in astonishment.

"The Lady of Pomeroy called me, and I have been into the west tower with her. She ——"

"Don't thee tell lies, girl," interrupted the old man, not believing a word.

"You are polite to-night," returned Bridget: "I have been into the west tower with my lady; into the haunted room. And now I am going to fetch a light that she may see the lines on the nun's picture."

As Jerome slowly took in the sense of the words, his mouth dropped, and his hands were lifted. "In there!" he muttered to himself in consternation. "And the lord said it was never to be opened to her—that she was too young to be frighted with such tales. She found the key, then, after all my excuses! What possessed the other key, I wonder, that I could not get it away from the lock?"

"Why, Jerome," exclaimed the Lady of Pomeroy, "the key you wanted was on the bunch!"

"As I find, madam. Pity I did not look more particularly."

Bridget came back with the light, and they all went into the room. Mrs. Pomeroy took the candle from her hand, and held it close to the lines on the picture. Bridget looked on composedly, and Jerome in abstraction, while she slowly read them.

"When Pomeroy's heir goes forth a wife to win,
And Pomeroy's heir goes forth in vain;
When Pomeroy's lord by a lie doth gain,
Then woe to the Pomeroys, twain and twain!"

Barely had Mrs. Pomeroy read this when a shriek from Bridget caused her to start back. She had inadvertently held the wax-light too near, for the writing was faint, and had set fire to the picture.

Bridget's screams went on. What with the blaze near to her and what with the superstitious fancies connected with the picture, the ill anticipated upon its destruction, she really could not contain herself. Of a calm, equable nature, she had never in her life been so startled as now; it may be said, so uncontrollably terrified. Combined with the superstitious dread came fears of the abbey's destruction by fire: and while Jerome was quietly putting the flames out, and scorching his poor hands in doing it, Bridget rushed into the next room, flew to the open casement, put forth her head, and shrieked, "Fire! fire!"

She was heard by one of the men, who happened to be in the cloisters below. He, looking the very image of incredulous astonishment, for he knew nothing of this expedition of Mrs. Pomeroy's, alarmed his fellows, and a host of them came running up. Jerome had put out the flames then, and was locking up the haunted room with the remains of the picture within it. Mrs. Pomeroy had come forth, and was standing by the shaking and trembling Bridget.

"How stupid you are, Bridget!" she fractiously said: for when vexed with ourselves, it is satisfactory to find a scapegoat to pitch upon: and the accident had vexed Mrs. Pomeroy very considerably. "It was startling for the minute, of course, but there's no cause for you to shiver and shake like that."

"Madam—I—I beg your pardon. I felt just as if I should die."

"For my part, I think it is as well that the old thing is destroyed," spoke Mrs. Pomeroy, striving to make light of the catastrophe, but in her heart wondering what Guy would say to it, and whether he

would be frightfully angry with her. "The worst is, I can't remember the lines. I wish I could have copied them first."

"Oh, ma'am, I know them by heart," said Bridget. "I can repeat them whenever you wish; or write them out for you."

It was at this juncture that the men got through the west wing, and into this last room. Jerome, trembling nearly as much as Bridget, told them all was safe now, and borrowed a couple of handkerchiefs to wrap round his hands. What fire was it, did they want to know—what was burnt, he added in answer to confused inquiries. Well, it was the picture.

The picture! Not one amongst the lot but started back a step at the ominous word. For in the household of the Lord of Pomeroy, comprising as it did many ancient and attached servitors, the doom, supposed to be hanging over the family, formed a not unfrequent topic of conversation. All had been permitted at some time or another, to steal up to see the nun's picture and read the prediction.

Making way for the Lady of Pomeroy, and bowing as she passed onwards between them, the descent was made in dismayed silence. Only Bridget, who could not possibly lose much time in finding her tongue, lagged behind to exchange whispers with Jerome.

"She'll die in her confinement, Jerome."

"What d'ye say?" returned Jerome, really not understanding.

"I'm afraid she will; our poor lady! She has caused the calamity, you see; and it's well known that whoever should do that would be the one on whom the evil will mostly fall. That's why the lords have taken such care of themselves and never gone anigh the picture."

"I wish my old hands had been burnt right off first, rather than they should have brought out the keys at all," was Jerome's bitter answer.

"Poor thing! Yes, she'll go when her baby is born."

"Nonsense!" irascibly uttered Jerome. "Don't you go and set that other notion agate."

"Talking in confidence to you isn't setting it agate."

"And within the next hour you'll talk of it in confidence to a dozen more! How old are you, Bridget?"

"Thirty last birthday. You know that."

"Yes. And, being thirty, one would ha' thought you might have learnt a little discretion. Die when her baby's born, indeed! You had better let the lord hear you say such a thing."

"I've done no harm: and I'm sure if prayers will ensure her safety, she will have mine. But it's an awful thing to happen!—and especially that it should have been his wife to do it. I thought she was holding the light very close. And now you come into Aunt Rex's parlour, Jerome, and let us see to your hands."

Barely had Mrs. Pomeroy gained her own rooms, when Guy

returned. Anxious about his wife, not caring to leave her at present longer than he could help, he always made a point of returning early. In her heart of hearts, she was somewhat afraid of her husband, knowing how stern he was by nature, and her courage failed her as she prepared to tell her tale. Better that he should hear it from herself than from the household.

"Guy," she whispered, nestling to him as he sat down by her on the sofa, "something very unfortunate has happened, and I want to tell you of it. I have had an accident and done some mischief."

The thought, passing through Guy's mind at this, was that she must have broken some one or other of the costly ornaments he had bought to adorn her sitting-room. Drawing her closer to him, a smile parted his lips as he looked down at her. All he could see was the parting of her bright brown hair, for her face was hidden.

"Dreadful mischief, no doubt," he answered fondly.

"I want you to forgive me for it; not to be too angry with me."

"I will not be angry with you at all: and I forgive you beforehand. What is it?"

In a voice that he could hardly hear, she told her tale, holding one of his hands between hers, as if playing with it. How that, sitting alone in the oak room, she had fallen on the wish to see the west wing opposite, and had gone to it with Jerome; and how that later, wanting to see the picture better and the lines on it, she had told Bridget to bring a candle; and—and—there she broke into tears.

"And what?" asked Guy in a low, strange voice, that did not sound like his own.

"Burnt it," she sobbed. "The flame of the candle caught the picture as I held it; and it blazed up, and burnt."

Not a word spoke Guy. Not a symptom of anger did he betray. His thoughts seemed to be gone a wool-gathering; his eyes had a far-away look in them.

"Won't you say you forgive me, Guy? I am so sorry; so vexed."

"Yes, yes," he answered hastily; "I said I forgave you beforehand. It does not matter: it cannot be helped. There, there, love; don't cry. But you should not have gone up there without me."

"And what do you think the prediction meant, Guy?—something about the Heir of Pomeroy failing to get a bride, and the lord winning one by a lie?"

"I think nothing," replied Guy in a sharper tone. "But don't go climbing about the abbey again, my dear; you are not in a fit state for it. As to the picture, it was a memento of a deed which, if tradition may be trusted, was a disgrace to the name of Pomeroy."

(To be continued.)

DREAMS.

A BELIEF, more or less strong, in dreams has belonged to all nations and all times. It forms a distinct thread in the gorgeously varied web of Homer; it has more than one panel to itself in the lively historic carving of Herodotus; it hovers about here and there in the Niebelungen-Lied, and other mediæval stories; it rings in the music of our ballads; it lingers still in the most picturesque folk-lore of rural districts, both at home and abroad.

Nor can we, when we think over the matter, much wonder that this faith is so deeply rooted in the minds of the common people. In the first place, Holy Writ itself seems in a certain way to set its seal on such a belief; and though we, of the higher educated classes, know and teach that since Apostolic times we have no authority for supposing that God yet speaks to man in visions, yet the masses still look upon the subject with an almost reverent eye. Then what strange things these dreams are in themselves. With what almost magic power do they sometimes suddenly call up a scene or place which has been nearly forgotten. What fantastically coloured, grotesquely grouped, unnaturally natural pictures they are of real life. How much there is about them which even the wisest among us can hardly explain. When we consider all this, we can scarcely be surprised that the lively imagination of the common people should still cling to its old faith in dreams.

The most retired country districts are of course the most superstitious on this point. Their thoroughgoing belief in dreams makes it a somewhat nervous matter to spend a week among the worthy folk of Devon and Cornwall. You can never tell at what moment in the day they may pounce down upon your innocent words or deeds to fit upon them a dream they had last night. If you put on your hat on one side, or let drop a tea-spoon, or chance to do anything else in the slightest degree out of the common, they are certain to find in your act an interpretation to some pet vision. "Their dream is out," they cry, in true west-country phrase, and through all the rest of the day they go about with a provokingly self-satisfied air. Other English rural regions have no doubt their legion of remarkable dream superstitions, but commend me to the west-country matron for bringing her visions to bear upon daily prosaic life.

To turn from the lower orders to those above them, we believe that more educated people than like to own it have a certain vague faith in dreams. How many of our friends tell us an ugly dream they have had, with a forced laugh which is very like a groan. How many relate their dreams with the gravity belonging to real facts. How many more never, we suspect, tell them at all, from a secret dislike to

hearing them treated with ridicule. We confess, ourselves, to an eerie feeling sometimes when we suddenly draw near to an object or person which has been with us very vividly in a last night's dream.

Several highly gifted men and women have had a certain faith in dreams. In one of his published letters, Charles Dickens relates a dream he had had, with a seriousness and circumstantiality which reveal plainly enough that, to him, it was no shadow of empty air. We read in Fredrika Bremer's life that she fully believed she should die at a certain age, because she had once dreamt that a departed friend had come to her and told her that in such a year she would be with him. She, however, outlived the appointed date, and thereby perhaps was cured of her belief in dreams.

One of the strangest effects of dreams is, when, as we say or do something, we suddenly have a feeling that we have said or done it before. If we follow back carefully the train of ideas thus called up, we shall find that it originated in some dream we had forgotten, till our present action or thought all at once called it up; but in our first bewilderment the sensation is, for the moment, singular and uncanny enough. We think that from this sort of feeling might first have arisen the creed of the transmigration of souls.

Healthy dreams are usually to be explained by looking back to the past. Dreams are very often an odd jumble of things we said, or did, or thought yesterday, and of things we said, or did, or thought long ago. It is this confusion which makes them sometimes, at first, seem so incomprehensible; but if we patiently trace out every feature in one vivid dream, we find almost to a certainty that it arises from events which have happened in our lives perhaps at different periods. The mind, in sleep, loses all sense of time, and embraces a whole existence at a glance.

In their dreams the most commonplace men and women are poets. The cook dreams that she is in a lovely flower garden, the city clerk that he is a knight at a tournament, the village schoolmaster that he is William the Conqueror. This power of dreams is a sweet and blessed one, for often it is the only ideal gleam which falls upon some hard, grey path of life.

In their dreams all men and women are true, whatever else they may be when they are awake. Could we look into the dreams of the murderer, we should find there beforehand the shadow of hs crime. Could we look into the dreams of the silent worker for good, whose deeds of mercy are counted by angels alone of all created beings, we should see there, in its full brightness, the flame of his love to God and man. In her dreams the daintily-dressed, softly-spoken lady of fashion is a strong-tongued virago. In her dreams the demure, over-worked governess is a romping school-girl. In her dreams the nun, whose heart is not in the hair-cloth and the vows, is a radiant coquette. If we could meet one another in dreamland, we should be in a real palace of truth. It was, perhaps,

this fact which gave Madame De Genlis the first idea of her witty, satirical story, "Le Palais de Vérité."

Old people often tell us that their dreams generally carry them back to the days of their youth. The old man sees again in his dreams the smile of his mother in her early womanhood, and hears again the brother, from whom he has been long estranged, prattling as a baby at his side, and gallops his pony across country in all the wild joy of a first fox-hunt, and steals a shy kiss from his first love. Thus do dreams come as kindly sprites to the grandfather, dozing in his arm-chair by the fire, when the young ones waltz and flirt and make sweet hay while the sun shines.

Some people are always seeing over and over again in their dreams a certain house, or a certain estate, or a certain landscape. They know every room in the house, even to the pictures on the wall; they could almost draw a map of the estate; the trees in the landscape are as familiar to them as the bushes in their garden, and yet they declare that they never beheld either house, or estate, or landscape, with their waking eyes. This phenomenon seems certainly difficult to explain. We suspect, however, that it usually arises from a mass of indistinct, confused memories of scenes and places the dreamer has once beheld, perhaps in early childhood, but which in his waking moments he has entirely forgotten. We often, too, meet in our dreams people whom we cannot ever remember to have seen when awake. We believe that these mysterious dream acquaintances are, like the houses and the landscapes, made up of dim remembrances of the faces and figures of persons casually seen somewhere by the dreamer when awake. If our theory about this phenomenon in dreams is true, sleep must have the same power of bringing back lost colours to memory, that certain chemicals have of bringing back the colours of the Pompëian frescoes.

When the mind is in a morbid state from disease or over-work, a dream will sometimes produce a most unpleasant feeling of vague discomfort, by first startling us from sleep, and making itself distinctly remembered; and then, as soon as slumber falls again upon the weary senses, flitting away, so that in the morning no trace of it can be recalled. All day the dream hovers about the sickly fancy, never far off, and yet never near enough to be taken hold of. It was surely some such feeling as this which, exaggerated by divine wrath of old, tormented the Babylonian king, and doomed todeath all the wise men except the chosen prophet of the Lord.

The dreams we remember, are never dreamt when we are in our deepest sleep, but always a few minutes before we awake, so that outward things often have a considerable influence in producing them. A sudden rheumatic pain in any part of the body will cause a dream of being in prison, with a chain wound around the suffering limb. A loudly moaning wind will bring a dream of plaintive music; and the shaking of the bed by a heavy step in the next room, a dream

about being in a boat. An eminent physician, who was curious concerning dreams, once resolved to try by experiment how far external influences reach the mind in slumber. He put to sleep an old woman with a harmless narcotic, and then began to practise upon her. First he raised her hands and clasped them. At once the corners of her mouth were drawn down, her face was puckered up and she uttered a low groan; the old lady was evidently dreaming that she was in chapel. Next he laid her hands again on her lap, and gently pulled open her mouth; the lips immediately adapted themselves to a smile, and the whole face grew bright and cheery. The old lady was certainly having now a funny dream. Last of all he hummed loudly a merry tune close to her ear; the old lady's feet began to jig, and she woke talking about the fiddlers.

Animals dream as well as men. Watch a dog in his sleep; his paws twitch, and his mobile tail stirs gently. No doubt he is again welcoming home his master, and enjoying it quite as much as he did when he was awake. Before long he gives a muffled bark, or growl; now he is in fancy driving some intruder off his domain, or threatening the life of a phantom rabbit. Surely this capacity of dreaming shows more power of thought in animals than they are generally accredited with by man.

There are some very precious dreams; the dreams which bring back to us the loved and lost; not as pale ghosts, but with all the warm colour of life in their cheeks, with the old light of tenderness in their eyes, and the old chime of mirth in their voices. They sit by us in the summer twilight, they wander with us through the spring fields, they share our household pleasures, they weep when we are sad. Till we meet them again in Heaven, may we often meet them in such dreams as these.

Notwithstanding all we have said to weaken faith in dreams, we have ourselves known a few instances in which a dream has seemed in truth a providential interposition. We will conclude this paper by relating two of them, which are facts.

One winter evening about fifty years ago, a post-chaise, with a single gentleman inside it, drove up to the little inn on the Pentland Frith, in the north of Scotland, where passengers who were going to cross to the Orkneys usually spent the night. The gentleman, whom we will call Mr. Mac T., was the owner of a large estate, and an old house which had belonged to his family for hundreds of years, in the Mainland, or chief of the Orkney Islands, and was now about to visit his property. It was a blustering, stormy night, but that only made more pleasant the cigar and the glass of whiskey, and the crackling wood-fire by which Mac T. sat chatting with the landlord, who was an old friend both of his father and himself, and who was proud of entertaining the "young laird," as he called him, with his wildest tales of adventure on the sea. They did not, however, sit late, for the Orkney packet sailed very early in the morning, and

Mac T. soon found himself in his cosy well-appointed little bedroom. The wind was chanting a grand Berserker melody, and the sea was roaring a deep bass accompaniment. Mac T. loved those sounds, for they had often been the lullaby of his childhood, and soon fell asleep.

For some hours he slept without an image or a thought reaching his mind; but at length, when the morning was glimmering grey in the east, a strange dream came to trouble him. He dreamt that he was in the ancient banqueting hall of his old house, in the Mainland, sitting at the head of a very long table. The banqueting hall was now in reality almost a ruin, but in his dream, Mac T. saw it hung with tapestry, and blazing with a hundred lights. The table was well filled on both sides, and he thought he glanced curiously down its length to see who his guests were. As he looked he shuddered in his dream. Those who sat at table with him were all his dead ancestors for many generations back. He knew their faces and dresses well from their portraits in the picture gallery. Next to him sat his own father, who had died about a year before. And at the bottom of the table sat a fair-haired man in a dress of skins, who was a Norse chieftain, the founder of the family. It seemed to him that he sat for some minutes as if spell-bound, while the spectres murmured together in low, hollow tones. At length they all rose, and slowly, one by one, in turns, left the hall. But before they went, each one paused at the door, and turning, raised his hand in a warning attitude, fixed his eyes on Mac T., and said in a deep voice, the word "Beware."

"The packet starts in twenty minutes, sir," cried a loud voice at the door, rousing Mac T. suddenly from sleep. Confused at first, yet soon remembering where he was, he sprang out of bed and began hurriedly to dress himself. Being a bad sailor, his first glance was naturally enough at the sea, close to which the inn stood. The wind had risen in the night. The waves thundered on the shore, and the little Orkney packet was tossing up and down like a limpet shell. As he gazed, his strange dream rose up with sudden distinctness before Mac T.'s mind. He was infected with a good deal of thorough Scotch superstition. Besides he did not much like the look of the sea, and so he resolved not to go till to-morrow. That day the Orkney packet was lost with every man on board, and Mac T. and his little wife, who was left at home with the babies, had to thank that warning dream for his life.

The other instance we have to tell is quite as singular. Many years ago the Rev. Mr. N. held a small living in the wildest part of west Somerset. The parish church stood on a bleak hill-side, and Mr. N., who was a bachelor, lodged in the farm-house close to it. Among his small flock there was no one in whom the clergyman took more interest than in Mary, the pretty daughter of the farmer, his landlord. When Mary was about twenty, Mr. N. was much troubled

by finding that she had formed an attachment with Jack Townsend, the cleverest workman and the most worthless fellow on the farm.

One autumn night the clergyman dreamt that Mary stood at his bedside and cried out in an imploring voice, "Come out on to the hill-side." The impression left on his mind on waking was so distinct that, if he had not known his door was locked, so that no one could enter the room, he would have thought Mary must in reality have been there. Feeling however sure that it was only a dream, he composed himself once more to sleep. But scarcely had he closed his eyes when Mary was again there, calling to him to come out on to the hill-side. Seven several times he tried to sleep, and seven times the phantom came back, always with the same cry.

At length, mastered by an almost irresistible impulse, he rose, dressed himself, and went out on the hill. He walked some distance, but could see nothing except the heather-bells waving in the moonlight; could hear nothing but a distant sheep-bell tinkling softly, and the stream warbling below in the valley. He was just going back, when suddenly a shrill cry reached him, seeming to come from a neighbouring combe. Hurrying in that direction, he saw at the bottom of the combe two figures, those of a man and a woman, apparently struggling with each other. As he drew near, the man ran away and the woman fell to the ground. When he came up he found that it was Mary. She had only fainted, and he soon brought her to herself. Then by degrees she confessed to him that her lover had persuaded her to meet him that night in the combe, bringing with her a small sum of money which she had saved from early childhood by laying by little gifts of friends and relations, and which according to the custom common among her class in that day, she had kept in an old stocking instead of in the bank. Townsend had promised to elope with her, and marry her, and as she loved him, and her father would not allow the match, she had consented to go. But when he met her, Townsend, instead of going away with her, had tried to rob her of her money. She had resisted, and struggled with him, and just then the clergyman had come up and the villain had run away. After that night Mr. N. was a believer in the providential nature of dreams.

When we know of such instances as these, it is of course impossible to treat dreams with utter carelessness. But a constant belief in them engenders quickly a morbid frame of mind, and a man or woman had far better trust to keen-sighted prudence, and vigilant common sense as prophets of the future, than to all the dreams which fill with rainbow-tinted phantoms the dusky kingdom of the night.

ALICE KING.

THE LAST OF THE CAROMELS.

WHEN a house is popularly allowed to be haunted, and its inmates get thin and white and restless, it is not the best place in the world for children: and this was supposed by Church Dykely to be the reason why Mrs. Nash Caromel the Second had never allowed her child to come home since the death of its father. At first it was said that she would not risk having him lest he should catch the fever Nash had died of: but, when the weeks went on, and the months went on, and still the child was kept away, people put it down to the other disagreeable fact.

Anyway, Mrs. Nash Caromel—or Charlotte Nave, as you please—did not have the boy home. Little Dun was kept at his grandfather's, Lawyer Nave; and Miss Harriet Nave took care of him: the other sister, Gwinny, remaining at Caromel's Farm. Towards the close of spring, when Dun was about two years old, he caught the whooping cough and had it badly. In August he was sent for change of air to a farm called the Rill, on the other side Pershore, Miss Harriet Nave taking the opportunity to go jaunting off elsewhere. The change of air did the child good, and he was getting strong quickly, when one night early in September croup attacked him, and he lay in great danger. News of it was sent to his mother in the morning. It drove her nearly wild with fear, and she set off for the Rill in a gig, her father driving it. So rare was the sight of her now, for she stuck indoors at Caromel's Farm as a snail sticks to its shell, that Church Dykely thought it an event, and talked of it all the day.

They got to the Rill—which lay across country, somewhere between Pershore and Wyre—in the course of the morning, and found little Dun gasping with his croup, and inhaling steam from a kettle. Moore told us there was nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream; but to Charlotte Nave, otherwise Caromel, there was nothing sweet at all except this little Dun. He was the light of her existence; the apple of her eye—to put it poetically. She sat by the bed-side, her pale face (so pale and thin to what it used to be) bent lovingly upon him, and wiping away the tears by stealth that came into her eyes. In the afternoon Dun was better; but the doctor would not say he was out of danger.

"If I could but stay here for the night! I can't bear to leave him," Charlotte snatched an opportunity to say to her father, when their friends, the farmer and his wife, were momentarily occupied.

"But you can't, you know," returned Lawyer Nave. "You must be home by sunset."

"By sunset? Nay, an hour after that would do."

"No, it will not do. Better be on the safe side."

"It seems *cruel* that I should have to leave him," she exclaimed, with a sob.

"Nonsense, Charlotte! The child will do as well without you as with you. You may see for yourself how much better he is. The farm cannot be left to itself at nights; remember that. We must start in half-an-hour."

No more was said. Nave went to see about the getting ready of the gig; Charlotte, all down in the dumps, stayed with the little lad, and let him pull about as he would her golden hair, and drank her tea by his side. Mr. and Mrs. Smith (good hospitable people, who had stood by Charlotte Nave through good report and ill report, believing no ill of her) pressed her to stay all night, promising, however, that every care should be taken of Duncan, if she did not.

"My little darling must be a good child and keep warm in bed, and when mamma comes in the morning he will be nearly well," breathed Charlotte, showering tears and kisses upon him when the last moment had come. And, with that, she tore herself away.

"Such a pity that you should have to go!" said Mrs. Smith, stepping to the door with her. "I think Gwendolen and old Grizzel might ha' been left for one night: they'd not ha' run away, nor the house neither. Come over as soon as you can in the morning, my dear; and see if you can't make arrangements to stay a day or two."

They were starting from the back door, as being the nearest and handiest; Nave, already in the gig, seemed in a rare hurry to get off. Mr. Smith helped Charlotte up; and away the lawyer drove, across the fold-yard, one of the farm-boys holding the outer gate open for them. The sun, getting down in the west, shone right in their eyes.

"Oh, dear, I have left my parasol!" cried Charlotte, just as they got to the gate. "I must have it: my blue parasol!" And Nave, giving an angry word to parasols in general, pulled the horse shortly up.

"You need not get out, hindering time!" growled he. "Call out for it. Here, Smith! Mrs. Caromel has forgotten her blue parasol."

"I'll run for it, ma'am," said the lad. Which he set off to do; leaving the gate to itself. Charlotte, who had been rising to get out, looked back to watch him; the lawyer looked back to shout again, in his impatience, to Mr. Smith. Their faces were both turned from the side where the gate was, and they did not see what was about to happen.

The gate, swinging slowly and noiselessly forward, touched the half-turned horse, which had been standing sideways, his head thrown out to see what the stoppage might be about.

Touched him, and startled him. Bounding upwards, he tore

forward down the narrow lane on which the gate opened ; tried to scale a bank, upset the gig, and pitched the lawyer and Charlotte out of it.

The farmer, and as many of his people as could be gathered at the moment, came running down, some of them armed with pitch-forks. Nave was groaning as he lay ; Charlotte was insensible. Just at first they thought her dead. Both were carried back to the Rill on hurdles, and the doctor was sent for. Mr. Smith started off a man on horseback to tell the ill-news of the accident at Caromel's Farm.

Ill-news. No doubt a bad and distressing accident. But now, see how curiously the "power that shapes our ends" brings things about. But for that accident, the mystery and the wrong being played out at Caromel's Farm, might never have had daylight thrown upon it. The accident, like a great many other accidents, had been sent to this wise and good end. At least, so far as we, poor blind mortals that we all are, down here, might presume to judge.

The horseman, clattering in at his hard pace to Caromel's Farm, delivered to Miss Gwendolen Nave, and to Grizzel, the old family servant, the tidings he was charged with—improving upon them as a thing of course.

Lawyer Nave, he were groaning awful, all a bleeding, and unable to move a limb. The young lady, she were dead ; leastways, looked like it.

With a scream and a cry, Gwendolen gave orders for her own departure. Seeking the bailiff, she bade him drive her in the tax-cart, there being no second gig.

"Now mind, Grizzel," she said, laying hold of the old woman's arm after flinging on her bonnet and shawl any how, "you will lock all the doors as soon as I am gone, and take out the keys. Do you hear ?"

"I hear, Miss Gwinny. My will's good to do it : you know that."

"Take care that you *do* do it."

Fine tidings to go flying about Church Dykely in the evening twilight ! Lawyer Nave (Nave by name, and knave by nature) half killed, his daughter quite. The news reached us at Dyke Manor : and Squire Todhetley, though holding Caromel's Farm in little estimation, thought it but neighbourly to walk over there and enquire how much was true, how much not.

You have not forgotten their history. How Nash Caromel married Charlotte Nave, not knowing but that his first wife, Charlotte Tinkle, was alive (in fact, believing in his heart she *was*) ; and how, when Charlotte Tinkle arrived from California in the course of a year or two, Nash died of the bother and of an attack of fever. People said he could not rest in his grave, some professed to have seen him. The latest of them was the Squire : as we were leaving the farm this

evening after making enquiries of old Grizzel. You remember what was said—that in bolting through the gate between the dark, overhanging trees, the Squire found himself in contact with Dobbs the blacksmith. Dobbs standing on the watch, in a stealthy, mysterious manner, without his boots.

"But what on earth are you here for, Dobbs?" reiterated the Squire. "Where are your boots?"

And all Dobbs did for answer, was to lay his hand respectfully on the Squire's coat-sleeve to begin with, so as to prevent his running away. Then he entered upon his whispered tale. Leaning our arms upon the low gate, we listened to it, and to the curious sound of weeping and wailing that stole faintly on our ears from amongst the garden trees. The scene altogether looked weird enough in the moonlight.

Dobbs, naturally an unbeliever in ghosts, had grown to think that this was no ghost at all, but somebody got up to resemble one by Caromel's Farm, for some mysterious purpose of its own. Remembering his attack of fright, and resenting it excessively, Dobbs determined if possible to unearth the secret: and this was the third night he had come upon the watch.

"But why stand without your boots?" whispered the Squire, who could not get over the shoeless feet.

"That I may make no noise in running to pounce upon him, sir," whispered back Dobbs. "I take 'em off and hide 'em in the copse behind here."

"Pounce upon whom?" demanded the Squire. "Can't you speak plainly?"

"That's what I'd like to know," breathed Dobbs. "I feel nearly sure, Squire, that the—the thing looking like Nash Caromel is not Nash Caromel. Nor his ghost, either."

"I never saw two faces more alike, and I've just seen it now," put in the Squire. "At least, as much as a shadow can look like a face."

"Ay," assented Dobbs. "I'm as sure, sir, as I am of my own forge, that it's a likeness got up by Nave to scare us. And I'll *eat* the forge," added Dobbs with emphasis, "if there's not something worse than ghosts at Caromel's Farm—though I can't guess what it is."

"What a villain he must be—and Nave, too!" cried the Pater, rubbing his red nose. "But, look here, Dobbs—how could any man put on the face of Nash Caromel?"

"I don't know how he does it, Squire, or what he does, but I'm good to find out. And if—just hark there again, sirs!"

The same faint sounds of wailing, of entreaty in a woman's voice, rose again upon the air. Dobbs, with a gesture to ask for strict silence, went noiselessly down the dark path in his brown woollen stockings, that looked thick enough for boots. Tod, eager for any

adventure, stole after him, and I brought up the rear. The Pater remained where he was, and held the gate open, expecting perhaps that we might want to make a rush through it as he had just done.

Two minutes more, and the mystery was solved. Near the house, under the shade of the closely intersecting trees, stood old Grizzel and the figure people had taken to be the ghost of Nash Caromel. It was Grizzel's voice we heard, full of piteous entreaty to him not to do something.

"Just for this night, master, for the love of heaven! Don't do it, just this night that I'm left in charge! They've trusted me, you see!"

The words seemed to make no impression. Pushing her hands back, the figure was turning impatiently away, when Dobbs seized upon it.

But, in sheer astonishment at seeing us, perhaps in terror, Dobbs let go again to step backwards; and the prize might have escaped but for the strong arms of Tod. It was indeed Nash Caromel. Not his ghost. Himself.

Nash Caromel worn to the veriest shadow mortal eyes ever gazed at. The Squire came up, and we all went into the house together.

Nash had not died. When the fever, of which it was feared he would die, gained its crisis, he awoke to life, not to death. But, terrified at his position—the warrant, applied for by Henry Tinkle, being out against him—overwhelmed with a sense of shame, he had feigned death as the only chance of escaping disgrace and trouble and punishment. The first thought perhaps was Nave's—or his and his daughter's combined. They wanted to keep the income, you see. Any way, they carried the thought out, and had successfully contrived to deceive doctors, undertakers, and the world. Nash, weak as a rat, had got out of bed to watch his own funeral procession down the avenue.

And there, in the upper rooms of the house he had since lived until now, old Grizzel sharing the secret. But a grievous complaint, partly brought on by uneasiness of mind, partly inherited from his father, who had died of it, had speedily attacked Nash, one for which there was no cure. It had worn him to a shadow.

He had walked in the garden sometimes. He had come out walking sometimes at night, had now and then crossed over to the thick copse, simply because to live entirely without fresh air, to stay inactive indoors, was intolerable to him. His wife and her sister did their best to prevent it. Nave came in the day time and would blow him up by the hour together; but they could not always keep him in. At last they grew alarmed. For, when they attempted to use force, by locking the doors, he told them that unless he was allowed his way in this, he would declare himself to the world. Life could not have been a bed of roses for any of them.

To look at him, as he sat there to-night by the kitchen fire, his cheeks white and hollow, his sunken eyes encased in dark rims, and his thin lips on the shiver, you'd hardly have given him a week of life. A great pity sat in the blacksmith's face.

"Don't reproach yourself, Dobbs: it's the best thing that could have happened to me," spoke Nash Caromel kindly. "I am not sure but I should have gone out this night and declared myself. Grizzel thought it, and put herself into a whirlwind of fear. Nobody but myself knows the yearning to do it that has been upon me. You won't go and tell it out in the market-place, will you, Dobbs?"

"I'll not tell on't to a single soul, sir," said Dobbs, earnestly. "Nobody shall know on't from me. And I'm as glad as glad can be that you be alive and did not die in that fever."

"We are all safe and sure, Caromel; not a hint shall escape us," spoke the Squire from the midst of his astonishment. "The first thing must be to get Duffham here."

"Duffham can't do any good; things have gone too far with me," said poor Nash. "Once this disorder lays regular hold of a man, there's no hope for him: you know that, Todhetley."

"Stuff!" said the Pater. "I don't believe it has gone too far, only you've got moped here and think so. We'll have Duffham here at once. You boys can go for him."

"No," dissented Caromel. "Duffham may tell the tale abroad. I'd rather die in peace, if I can."

"Not he. Duffham! Why, you ought to know him better. Duffham will be as secret as ourselves. Come, be off, lads: and, mind, we trust *you*."

Nash Caromel sighed and said no more. He had been wanting badly enough to see a friend or two, but not to be shown up to the parish. We went out with Dobbs.

This discovery might not have supervened, I take it, had Charlotte Nave and the lawyer not been upset in the gig. They would have stood persistently in his light—perhaps have succeeded in locking him in by force! As it was, we had it all our own way.

"How could you lend yourself to so infamous a deception?" cried the Squire to old Grizzel, following her into the pantry to ask it, when she returned from bolting the door after us. "I'm not at all sure that you could not be punished for it. It's—it's a conspiracy. And you, of all people, old Grizzel, to forget the honour of the Caromels! Why! you lived with his father!—and with his brother. All these years!"

"And how could I tell again him when they asked me not?" contended Grizzel, the tears dropping on to a tin saucepan she was rubbing out. "Master Nash was as dear to me as the others were. Could it be me to speak up and say he was not in the coffin, but only old things to make up weight? Could it be me to tell he was

alive and hiding up aloft here, and so get him put in prison? No, sir; the good name of the Caromels was much to me, but Master Nash was more."

"Now, come, old woman, where's the good of crying like that? Well, yes; you have been faithful, and it's a great virtue. And—and there's a shilling or two for you."

"Have you been blowing her up?" asked Nash, as the Squire went back to him, and sat down on the other side the wide kitchen hearth, the fire throwing its glow upon the shining bricks, square and red, and upon Nash Caromel's wan face, in which it was not very difficult to read death. He had put his out-of-door coat off, a long brown garment, and sat in a grey suit. The Squire's belief was that he'd not have minded getting into the fire itself; he sat there shivering and shaking, and seeming to have no warmth left in him.

"I have," said the Squire in answer. "Told her she did not show much regard for the honour of the family—lending herself to such a deception!"

"Poor old Grizzel!" sighed Nash, with a half smile. "She has lived upon thorns, fearing I should be discovered. As to the family honour, Todhetley, the less said about that the better."

"How *could* you do it, Caromel?"

"I don't know," answered Nash with apathy, bringing his face closer to the blaze. "I let it be done, more than did it. All I did, or could do, was just to lie still in my bed. The fever had left me weaker than a child. And, when I got stronger—what was done could not be undone. Not that I seek to defend or excuse myself. Don't think that."

"And, in the name of all that's marvellous, what could have put such a monstrous idea into your heads?" demanded the Squire, getting up to pace the kitchen.

"Well, I have always fancied that business at Sandstone Torr did," replied Nash, who had no idea of reticence now, but spoke out as freely as you please. "It had come to light, you know, not long before. Stephen Radcliffe had hidden his brother in the old tower, passing him off to the world as dead; and so, I suppose, it was thought that I could be hidden and passed off as dead."

"But Stephen Radcliffe never got up a mock funeral. His tale was, that Frank had died in London. You were bold people. What will Parson Holland say, when he comes to learn that he read the burial service over a box of rubbish?"

"I don't know," was the helpless reiteration of poor Nash. "The trouble and worry of it altogether, the discomforts of my position, the constant, never-ceasing dread of discovery have—have been to me what you cannot realise. But for going out of the house at night and striding about in the fresh, free air, I should have become mad. It was a *taste* of freedom. Neither could I always confine myself to

the walks of the garden; whether I would or not, my feet would carry me beyond it and into the shaded copse."

"Frightening people that met you!"

"When I heard footsteps approach I hid myself—though not always quite in time. I was more put out at meeting people than they were at meeting me."

"I wonder your keepers here ever let you get out!" cried the Squire, musingly.

"They tried hard to keep me in: and generally succeeded. It was only by fits and starts I gained my way."

But the Squire did not get over the discovery. He strode about the large kitchen, rubbing his face, giving out sundry Bless my hearts! at intervals. The return to life of Charlotte Tinkle had been marvellous enough, but it was nothing to this.

Meanwhile we were on our road to Duffham. Leaving Dobbs at his own forge, we rushed on, and found the doctor in his little parlour at supper; pickled eels and bread and cheese: the eels in the wide stone jar they were baked in—which was Nomy's way of serving pickled fish.

"Will you sit down and take some?" asked Duffham, pointing to the jar. Out of which he took the pieces with a fork as he wanted them.

"I'd like to, but there's no time for it," answered Tod, eyeing the jar wishfully. Pickled eels are a favourite dish in our parts: and you don't often eat anything as good.

"Look here, Duffham," he went on: "we want you to go with us and see—see somebody: and to undertake not to tell tales out of school. The Squire has answered for it that you will not."

"See who?" asked Duffham, going on with his supper.

"A ghost," said Tod, grimly. "A dead man."

"What good can I do *them?*"

"Well, the man has come to life again. Not for long, though, I should say, judging by his looks. You are not to go and tell of it, mind."

"Tell what?"

"That he is alive, instead of being, as is supposed, under a grave-stone in yonder churchyard. I am not sure but that you went to his funeral."

Tod's significant tone, half serious, half mocking, attracted Duffham's curiosity more even than the words. But he still went on with his eels.

"Who is it?"

"Nash Caromel. There. Don't fall off in a faint. Caromel has come to life."

Down went Duffham's fork. "Why—what on earth do you mean?"

"It is not a joke," said Tod. "Nash Caromel has been alive all

this while, concealed in his house—just as Francis Radcliffe was concealed in the tower. The Squire is with him now—and he is very ill."

Duffham appealed to me. "Is this true, Johnny Ludlow?"

"Yes, sir, it is. We found him out to-night. He looks as if he were dying. Dobbs is sure he is."

Leaving his eels now, calling out to old Nomy that she might take away the supper, Duffham came off with us at once. Dobbs ran up as we passed his forge, and went with us to the turning, talking eagerly.

"If you can cure him, Mr. Duffham, sir, I should take it as a great favour, like, showed to myself. I'd not have pounced upon him for all the world, to give him pain, in the state he's in. You never saw anybody look more like dying."

They were in the kitchen still, when Grizzel opened the door to us, the fire bigger and hotter than ever. The first thing Duffham did was to order Caromel to bed, and to have a good fire lighted in his room.

But there was no hope for Nash Caromel. The Squire told us so, going home that night. Duffham thought about ten days more would see the end of him.

"And how have things gone during my short absence, Grizzel?" demanded Miss Gwinny Nave alighting from the tax-cart the following morning, upon her return to Caromel's Farm.

"Oh, pretty well," answered Grizzel, who in her heart detested Miss Gwinny and all the Naves. "The master seems weaker. He have took to his bed, and got a fire in his room."

"When did he do that?"

"He come down last night after you went, Miss Gwinny, and sat over this here kitchen fire for ever so long. Then he went up to bed, and I lighted him a fire and took him up some hot arrowroot with a wine glass o' brandy in it. Shivering with cold, he was."

"And he has not got up this morning?"

"No; and he says he does not mean to get up. 'I've taken to my bed for good, Grizzel,' he says to me this morning when I went in to light the fire again and see what he'd eat for breakfast. And I think he has, Miss Gwinny."

Which information considerably lightened the doubt that was tormenting Miss Nave's mind. She wanted, oh how badly, and *was* wanted, to remain at the Rill, being sorely needed there; but she had not seen her way clear to do it. If Nash was indeed confined to his bed, she might perhaps venture to leave him for a day or two to Grizzel. But, don't think old Grizzel mean for keeping in what had taken place: she was only obeying orders. Duffham and the Squire had laid their heads together and then talked to Caromel; and it was agreed that for the present nothing should be disclosed.

"And what news have you brought from the Rill, ma'am?" questioned Grizzel, who was making a custard pudding at the kitchen table. "I hope you found things better than you feared."

"They could not well be worse," sighed Miss Gwinny, untying her bonnet. She had not the beauty of Charlotte. Her light complexion was like brick-dust, and her hair was straw-coloured. Not but what she was proud of her hair, wearing it in twists, with one ringlet trailing over the left shoulder. "Your mistress lies unconscious still; it is feared the brain is injured; and papa's leg is broken in two places."

"Alack a-day!" cried Grizzel, lifting her hands in consternation. "Oh, but I'm sorry to hear it, Miss Gwendolen! And the pretty little boy?"

Miss Gwendolen shook her head. "The croup came on again last night worse than ever," she said, with a rising sob. "They don't know whether they will save him."

Grizzel brushed away some tears as she began to beat up her eggs. She was a tender-hearted old thing, and loved little Dun. Miss Nave put aside her bonnet and shawl, and turned to the staircase to pay a visit to Nash. But she looked back to ask a question.

"Then, I am to understand that you had no trouble with the master last night, Grizzel? He did not want to force himself out?"

"The time for that has gone by, ma'am, I think," answered Grizzel, evasively, not daring and not wishing to confess that he had forced himself out, and what the consequences were. "He seems a deal weaker to-day, Miss Gwinny, than I've ever seen him."

And when Miss Gwinny got into Nash's room she found the words true. Weak, inert, fading, there lay poor Nash. With the discovery, all struggle had ceased; and it is well known that to resign oneself to weakness quietly, makes weakness ten times more apparent. One thing struck her greatly: the hollow sound in the voice. Had it come on suddenly? If not, how was it she had never noticed it before? Struck her with a sort of unpleasant chill: for she believed that peculiar hollowness is generally the precursor of death.

"You are feeling worse, Nash, Grizzel says," she observed; and she thought she had never seen him looking half so ill.

"Oh, I am all right, Gwendolen," answered he. "What of Charlotte and the child?"

Sitting down on the edge of the large bed, Gwendolen told him all there was to tell. Her papa would get well in time, though he could not be moved yet awhile; but Charlotte and the child were lying in extreme danger.

"Dear me! dear me!" he said, and began to cry, as Grizzel had begun. When a man is reduced, as Nash was, faint in mind and in body, the tears are apt to lie near the eyes.

"And there's nobody to attend upon them but Mrs. Smith and her maids—two of the stupidest country wenches you ever saw,"

said Gwendolen. "I did not know how to come away this morning. The child is more than one person's work."

"Why did you come?"

"Because I could not trust you; you know that, Nash. You want to be up to your tricks too often."

"My tricks?"

"Yes. The going out of doors at night. I'm sure it is a dreadful responsibility that's thrown upon me. And all for your own sake!"

"You need no longer fear that—if you call my going out the responsibility. I shall never get out of this bed again, Gwinny."

"What makes you think so?"

"Look at me," answered Nash. "See if you think it likely. I do not."

She shook her head doubtingly. He certainly did look too ill to stir—but she remembered the trouble there had been with him; the fierce, wild yearning for exit, that could not be controlled.

"Are you not satisfied? Listen then: I give you my solemn word of honour not to go out of doors; not to attempt to do so. You must go back to Charlotte and the boy."

"I'll see later," decided Gwinny. "I shall stay here till the afternoon, at any rate."

And when the afternoon came she took her departure for the Rill. Convinced by Nash's state that he could not quit his bed, and satisfied at length by his own solemn and repeated assurances that he would not, Gwinny Nave consigned him to the care of Grizzel, and quitted Caromel's Farm.

Which left the field open again, you perceive. And the Squire and Duffham were there that evening, as they had been on the previous one.

It was a curious time—the few days that ensued. Gwendolen Nave came over for an hour or two every other day, but otherwise Caromel's Farm was a free house. Her doubts and fears were gone, for Nash grew worse very rapidly; and, though he sat up in the room sometimes, could not have got down stairs though the house were burning—as Grizzel put it. And he seemed so calm, so tranquil, so entirely passive under his affliction, so resigned to his enfeebled state, so averse to make any exertion of any kind, that Miss Gwinny could not have felt much easier had he been in the burial ground where Church Dykely took him to be.

What with his past incarceration, which had endured twelve months, and what with the approach of death, which he had seen looming for pretty nearly half that time, Nash Caromel's conscience had come back to him. It was pricking him in more corners than one. As his love for Charlotte Nave weakened—and it had been going down a long time, for he saw what the Naves were now, and what they had done for him—his love for Charlotte Tinkle came back, and he began to wish he could set wrongs to rights. That

never could be done; he had put it out of his power; but he meant to make some little reparation, opportunity being allowed him.

"I want to make a will, Todhetley," he said one evening to the Squire, as he sat by the fire, dressed, a huge carriage-rug thrown on his knees for warmth. "I wonder if my lawyer could be induced to come to me?"

"Do you mean Nave?" retorted the Squire, who could not for the life of him help having a fling at Caromel once in a way. "He has been your lawyer of late years."

"You know I don't mean Nave; and if I did mean him he could not come," said poor Nash. "I mean our family lawyer, Crow. Since I discarded him for Nave he has turned the cold shoulder upon me. When I've met him in the street at Evesham, he has either passed me with a curt nod or looked another way. I would rather have Crow than anybody, for he'd be true, I know, if he could be induced to come."

"I'll see about it," said the Squire.

"And you'll be executor, won't you, Todhetley? You and Duffham."

"No," said the Squire. "And what sort of a will are you going to make?"

"I should like to be just," sighed Nash. "As just as I know how. As just as I can be under the unfortunate circumstances I am placed in."

"That you have placed yourself in, Caromel."

"True. I think of it night and day. But she ought to be provided for. And there's the boy!"

"Who ought to be?"

"My second wife."

"I don't say to the contrary. But there is somebody else, who has a greater and prior claim upon you."

"I know. My heart would be good to leave her all. But that would hardly be just. Poor Charlotte! how patient she has been!"

"Ah, you threw off a good woman when you threw her off. And when you made that other infamous will, leaving her name out of it ——"

"It was Nave made it," interrupted Nash, as hotly as his wasted condition allowed him to speak. "He got another lawyer to draw it up, for look's sake—but he virtually made it. And, Todhetley, I must—I *must* get another one made," he added, getting more excited; "and there's no time to be lost. If I die to-night that will would have to stand."

With the morning light the Squire went off to Evesham, driving Bob and Blister, and saw the lawyer, Crow—an old gentleman with a bald head. The two were shut up in a private room, and it seemed as if they never meant to come out again.

First of all, old Crow had to recover his astonishment at hearing

Nash Caromel was living, and that took him some time; next he had to get over his refusal to act again for Nash, and that took him longer.

"Mind," said he at last, "if I do consent to act—to see the man and make his will—it will be done out of the respect I bore his father and his brother, and because I don't like to stand in the way of an act of justice. Mrs. Nash Caromel was here yesterday ——"

"Mrs. Nash Caromel!" interrupted the Squire, in a puzzle, for his thoughts had run over to Charlotte Nave. Which must have been very foolish, seeing she was in bed with a damaged head.

"I speak of his wife," said the old gentleman, loftily. "I have never called any other woman Mrs. Nash Caromel. Her uncle, Tinkle, of Inkberrow, called about the transfer of some of his funded property, and she was with him. I respect that young woman, Squire Todhetley."

"Ay, to be sure. So do I. Well, now, you will let me drive you back this afternoon, and you'll take dinner with me, and we'll go to Caromel's Farm afterwards. We never venture thither before night; that Miss Gwinny Nave makes her appearance sometimes in the day-time."

"It must be late in the afternoon then," said the lawyer, rather crossly—for he did not enter into the business with a good grace yet.

"All the same to me," acquiesced the Pater, pleased at having got his consent on any terms.

And when the Squire drove in that evening just at the dinner-hour and brought Lawyer Crow with him, we wondered what was agate. Old Jacobson, who had called in and been invited to stay by the Mater, was as curious as anything over it, and asked the Squire, aside, what he was up to, that he must employ a strange man.

And the will Nash Caromel wished to make was accomplished, signed and sealed, himself and this said Evesham lawyer being alone privy to its contents. Dobbs the blacksmith was fetched in, and he and Grizzel witnessed it.

And, as if Nash Caromel had only lived to make the will, he went galloping on to death at railroad speed directly it was done. A change took place in him during that same night. His bell rang for Grizzel, and the old woman thought him dying.

But he rallied a bit the next day: and when the Squire got there in the evening, he was sitting up by the fire, dressed. And terribly uneasy.

"I want to see her," he began, before the Pater had time to say, How are you, or How are you not. "I can't die in peace, unless I see her. And it will not be long first now. I am a bit better, but I thought I was dying in the night: has Grizzel told you?"

The Pater nodded in silence. He was struck with the change in Nash.

"Who is it you want to see? Charlotte Tinkle?"

"Ay, you've guessed it. 'Twasn't hard to guess, was it? I want to see her, Todhetley. I know she'd come."

Little doubt of that. Had Nash wanted her to visit him in the midst of a fiery furnace, she'd have rushed into it headlong.

But there were difficulties. Charlotte Tinkle was not one of your strong-minded women who are born without nerves; and to tell her that Nash Caromel was alive and not dead might send her into hysterics for a week. And, besides, Harry Tinkle was Nash Caromel's bitter enemy: if he learnt the truth, he might be for handing him over, dying or living, to old Jones the constable.

"I don't see how she is to be got here, and that's the truth, Caromel," spoke the Squire, awaking from his reverie. "It's not a thing I should like to undertake.—Here comes Duffham."

"I know what you are thinking of—Harry Tinkle," returned Nash, as Duffham felt his pulse. "When I was supposed to have died, balking him of his revenge, he grew mad with rage. For a month after, he abused me to everybody he met in the most atrocious terms: in public rooms, in ——"

"Who told you that?" interrupted the Squire. "Nave?"

"Nave. I saw no one else to tell me." Duffham laughed.

"Then it was just as false as Nave is. You might have known Harry Tinkle better."

"Well, I suppose you think he might give me trouble now. But he would hardly care to apprehend a dying man."

Duffham undertook this expedition—if you can call it one. He found it easier than he anticipated. That same evening, upon quitting Caromel's farm, Duffham went mooning along deep in thought, as to how he should make the disclosure to Charlotte, when he overtook her near his home. Her crape veil was thrown back; her face looked pale and quiet in the starlight.

"You are abroad late," said Duffham.

"I went to see old Miss Pinner this afternoon, and stayed tea with her," answered Charlotte. "And now I am going to run home."

"Would you mind coming in for a few minutes, Mrs. Caromel?" he asked, as they reached his door. "I have something to say to you."

"Can you say it another time? It is nine o'clock, and my mother will be wondering."

"No; another time may not do," said Duffham. "Come in. I won't detain you long."

And, being just one of those yielding people that never assert a will of their own, in she went.

Shut up in Duffham's surgery, which was more remote from Nomy's ears than the parlour, Duffham disclosed to her by degrees the truth. Whether he had to get out his sal-volatile over it, or to recover her from fits, we did not hear. One thing was certain: that

when Mrs. Nash Caromel re-commenced her walk homewards, she was too bewildered to know whether she went on her feet or her head. By that time on the following evening she would have seen her husband.

At least, such was the programme Duffham carved out. But to that bargain, as he found the next day, there might be two words.

Eleven was striking in the morning by the kitchen clock at Caromel's farm, when Grizzel saw Miss Gwinny driving in. The damaged gig had been mended, and she now drove backwards and forwards herself.

"How's the master?" asked she when she entered the kitchen.

"Very ill," answered Grizzel. "He won't be with us long now, ma'am."

And when Miss Gwinny saw Nash, and saw how greatly he was altered in the last two days, she thought as Grizzel did—that death was close at hand. Under these circumstances, she sat down to reflect on what she ought to do: whether to remain herself in the house, or whether to go back to the Rill and report to her father and sister. For the latter had come out of her insensibility; the doctors said there was no permanent injury and she could soon be removed home if she wished to be.

"What do you think, Grizzel?" she enquired, condescending to ask counsel. "It seems not right to leave him—and you won't like to be left alone, either, at the last. And I don't see that any end will be gained by my hastening back to tell them. They'll know it soon enough: and they cannot come to him."

"As you please, Miss Gwinny," replied Grizzel, trembling lest she should remain and complicate matters, but not daring to urge her departure; Gwinny Nave being given, as a great many more ladies are, to act by the rules of contrary in the matter of advice. "It seems hardly right, though, not to let the mistress know he is dying. And I am glad the child's well: dear little thing!"

Gwinny Nave sat pulling at her one straw ringlet, her brow knitted in abstraction. Various reflections, suggesting certain unpleasant facts, passed rapidly through her mind. That Nash would not be here many days longer, perhaps not many hours, was a grave fact: and then what of the after necessities that would arise? A sham funeral had gone out of that house not over long ago: but how was the real funeral to go out, and who was to make the arrangements for it? The truth of Nash Caromel's being alive, and of the trick which had been played, would have to be disclosed then. And Mr. Nave was incapacitated, he could do nothing, and her sister could do as little; and it seemed to be all falling upon herself, Gwinny; and who was to know but she might be punished for letting Nash lie and die without calling in a doctor to him?

With every fresh moment of thought, some darker complication presented itself. Miss Gwinny began to see that she had better get

away, and leave old Grizzel to it. The case must be laid before her father. He might invent some scheme to avoid exposure: for though Lawyer Nave was deprived for the present of action, his mind was not less keen and fertile than usual.

"I think, Grizzel, that the mistress ought to be told how ill he is," said she at length. "I shall go back to the Rill. Do all you can for the master: I daresay he will rally."

"That he never will," spoke Grizzel on impulse.

"Now don't you be obstinate," returned Miss Gwinny.

Gwendolen Nave drove back to the Rill. Leaving, as she thought, all responsibility upon old Grizzel. And, that evening, the coast being clear again, Charlotte Tinkle, piloted by Duffham, came to Caromel's Farm and had an interview with her once recreant husband. It lasted longer than Duffham had bargained for; every five minutes he felt inclined to go and knock at the door. Her sobs and his dying voice, which seemed to be sobbing too, might be heard by all who chose to listen. At last Duffham went and said that it must end: the emotion was bad for him. She was kneeling before the sofa on which he lay, her tears dropping on his face.

"Good-bye, good-bye, Charlotte," he whispered. "I have never cared for anyone as I cared for you. Believe that. God bless you —and forgive me!"

And the next to go in was Harry Tinkle—to clasp Caromel's hand, and to say how little he had needed to fear him. And the next was the Reverend Mr. Holland: Nash had asked for the parson to be sent for.

Grizzel got a surprise the next day. She had just taken some beef-tea up to her master, which Duffham had called out for—for the end was now so near that the doctor had not chosen to defer his visit till dark—when a closed fly drove up, out of which stepped Miss Gwinny and her sister. Old Grizzel dropped the waiter, thinking it must be her mistress's ghost.

But it was Charlotte herself. Upon hearing Gwinny's report, she had insisted upon coming home—and Nave supported her views. That stupid old Grizzel, left to her own devices, might be for getting frightened and for calling in half the parish. The doctor in attendance at the Rill had said Mrs. Caromel might go home if she had any urgent reason for wishing it—and here she was. And really she seemed tolerably well again; quite herself.

Passing Grizzel with a nod, she went upstairs, opened Nash's door, and then—drew back with a scream. For there she saw two strangers. Mr. Duffham was leaning over the bed, trying to feed Nash with spoonfuls of beef-tea; Parson Holland (who had stayed with Nash all night) sat by the fire. Poor Nash himself lay without motion: the hours were very limited now.

Well, there ensued a commotion. Charlotte Nave went down to blow up Grizzel; and she did it well, in spite of her recent illness.

Grizzel answered that she was not to blame; it was not she who had betrayed him: Dobbs the blacksmith and Squire Todhetley had found him out, and the Squire had called in Duffham. Charlotte the Second had to make the best of a bad case; but she did not suspect half the treachery which had been at work.

There is no space to enlarge upon the day. Nash died that night: without having been able to speak a word to Charlotte the Second; he was past that when she came; though he shook hands with her.

And the other funeral, which Miss Nave had foreseen a difficulty over, took place without any. Unless it might be said that the crowd made one. Nash Caromel dead a second time! Church Dykely had never been astounded like this.

But the one dire act of treachery had to come out yet. Nash Caromel had made a fresh will. Crow the lawyer brought it in his pocket when he came from Evesham to attend the funeral, and he read it aloud afterwards. Mrs. Nash the Second sat biting her lips as she listened.

Caromel's Farm and everything upon it, every stick and stone possessed by Nash, was directed to be sold without delay. Of the money this should realize, the one half was devised to "my dear wife Charlotte, formerly Charlotte Tinkle;" the other half was to be invested by trustees and settled upon "my child, Duncan Nave." His mother, Charlotte Nave, was to receive a stated portion of the interest for her life, or until she should marry again: and that was all the will said about Charlotte the Second.

There's not much more to tell. As soon as might be the changes were carried out. Before Lawyer Nave's leg was fit to go again, Caromel's Farm had been purchased by the Squire, and Harry Tinkle had taken it of him on a long lease. Just after Harry got into it with his little girl, Mrs. Tinkle died; and Charlotte, well off now, came to live in it with him. The other Charlotte said she was in bad health, and went off to stay at the sea-side. And Nave, when he came out again in the eyes of Church Dykely (walking lame), was fit to swallow us up with rage. He considered ladies' parasols an infamous institution and wished they were all sunk in the sea; especially that particular blue one of Charlotte's which had led to the accident that unlucky afternoon.

It seemed strange that, after all the chances and changes, it should be a Mrs. Nash Caromel (she was always given her true name now) to inhabit Caromel's Farm. She, forgiving and loving, made friends with little Dun for poor Nash's sake, inviting him often to spend the day with her, and picking him choice fruit off the trees.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

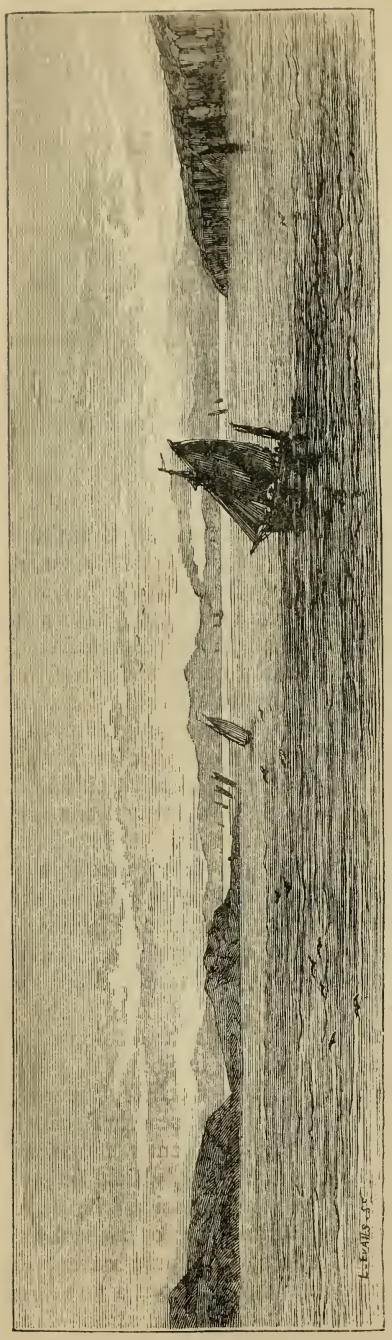
THE ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood, Author of "Through Holland."

HE who goes to the Orkneys for relaxation and enjoyment must take the risk of fair weather. Everything depends upon the fulfilment of this condition, and nothing can be done without it. The sources of amusement are not unlimited, but they are good of their kind; they brace up the nerves and the muscles, and send a man back to a crowded town and hard work, ready to take his part in the battle of life. There is a certain amount of grouse shooting; there is good fishing, both sea and lake; and there is no lack of boating. The surrounding islands—dating from the mainland—may be visited; the more distant by means of the little steamer that leaves Kirkwall twice a week, and those nearer home in smaller boats.

But so sudden are the changes of climate and weather, that there is a certain amount of risk in venturing any distance from the mainland in a sailing or rowing boat. Not precisely a risk to life, but certainly of being out on the water many more hours than was bargained for at starting, and in a state of misery: the discomfort of being wet through and through with the water coming down from above or shipped in from below. The bright sunshine, and cloudless sky, and fresh breeze which made eight o'clock a smiling morn, hot and exhilarating, at noon may have turned to torrents of rain and leaden skies, or, worse still, to a thick, impenetrable mist, cold and chilling to the bone: an insidious enemy that lays many a one low upon his back in the pains and penalties of rheumatism and lumbago. The most powerful charm against these troubles is to invoke the "spirits of the vasty deep": spirits consisting not of good and evil genii, but of distillations from pure malt, that Scotchmen call whisky, and have learned only too well its good and bad qualities. This, taken in moderation, is the best antidote to fogs and rains and Scotch mists.

But the moderation must be observed. Not after the fashion of a boatman, who went out with us for a day's fishing in Shetland. We had taken a stock of Bass's pale ale in the boat—which, by the way, is perhaps not the best beverage for these northern seas and misty isles—but no whisky. Our boatman, Sandy, innocently remarked that he had brought with him a bottle of pure water, which he preferred to beer—though he had no objection to an occasional bottle of the latter. From his supply of pure water, he took occasionally a good pull and a strong pull: and I noticed that the pure water had a surprising effect upon his cheerfulness, and brought out a fine flow of conversational powers. Still I thought—if I thought at all—that



Orkney Islands, looking towards Kirkwall.

it was pure water, and that only. I was not so much surprised at my own innocence, as at that of my companion, who, no recent visitor to Shetland, might have been more on the alert. When the supply was gone, Sandy gazed at the empty bottle with a melancholy that told well for the attractions of total abstinence. It was only when we landed, and Sandy's gait had gained too much of the unsteadiness of the boat, that the truth flashed upon us. "That bottle of pure water was pure whisky," muttered G., almost staggering, though from a different cause. "And our beer might have been more worthily destined." In truth we had somewhat denied ourselves for the sake of an ungrateful hypocrite.

In its season there is, I have said, a certain amount of grouse shooting in Orkney; quite enough to furnish good sport. Mr. Dunnet, of the Kirkwall hotel, had a number of acres at his command, for the benefit of his guests; but it is of course to be had in greater perfection by those who may be acquainted with the various "lairds" or estate owners of the islands, who carefully preserve their game. The grouse is an unknown bird in Shetland, though common enough in Orkney. There are certain lakes also, well stocked with trout. But the chief pleasure and attraction is to be cruising about the

water on a warm day, in and out amongst the neighbouring isles ; to note, enjoy, and revel in the wonderful tone and colouring of land and sea ; the exquisite purity and lightness of the air, the corresponding brightness of the sky. Over and above this, there is the quietness and repose of the islands and seas ; characterising them in the most marked manner : imparting a sense of solitude to the visitor, yet neither dreariness nor desolation ; refreshing the spirit, soothing and restoring the nerves of anyone who has come from "down south," overdone, it may be, with work and the gaieties of a London season : anxious to get, not only out of, but very far away from the restless crowd, the glitter and glare, the rush and whirl, that after a certain point weigh as a nightmare upon all save those happy few who came into the world before nerves were invented. I know nothing more

Ruins of Church, Egleshay.

invigorating in such a case than a sojourn in the Orkney, but more especially and emphatically, in the Shetland Islands.

The traveller must be well equipped. A thin yachting suit that would do for a cruise in the Mediterranean, would in this northern climate soon land him where the wicked cease from troubling. Thick clothes, with warmth but not weight in them, that will resist many a drenching of sea-water, will be found serviceable. A long ulster with a hood to it will be highly valued. Thick boots, and of course top boots if much lake or fly fishing is intended, must not be omitted. For walking, thick boots are optional. Most men will say they can walk much further in thick than in thin boots : my own experience is the opposite. Waterproof leggings and overcoat will frequently bring indifference to rough seas and pelting rains, and send you home with a dry skin. It is important to be suitably

clad in these islands. You are not dressing for fashion: and as frequently you have no one but a boatman, the fishes, and the gulls to keep you company, it matters little if you sometimes look startling enough to amaze a wild Indian. The refinements of civilized life will be more appreciated in their turn.

One fine morning—it was a Saturday, and one of the few bright skies I had in Orkney—I took a boat, and with a couple of trusty men sailed away from Kirkwall. Our destination was the neighbouring Isle of Egleshay. We carried with us a supply of bottled ale and sandwiches, for the hour of our return was uncertain. The steamer that had come in that morning from Scotland left the harbour at the same moment, and for a little time we had a race; our small craft tumbling and beating about in the rough water caused by the paddles. This passed away, and soon no signs remained of the steamer but a long line of smoke. The sea was perfectly calm, but a fresh breeze was blowing. The wind was against us; consequently, when the sail was hoisted, we had to tack. This prolonged the cruise, but was rather pleasant than otherwise. The day was before us; time was our own. It is more enjoyable to sail than to row. "A splendid breeze to bring us home," remarked the old boatman to his mate. "We shall run before the wind and get back in less than an hour." But, as the event proved, he was out of his reckoning.

The chief attraction of Egleshay is its ancient church—or rather the ruins of what was once a church. There is also the ruin of the Palace of Birsay in the extreme north-west of the mainland: an ancient seat of the Earls of Orkney. The site is well chosen for a palace, bordering the water and sheltered by the hills. There is Noltland Castle in the Island of Westray, also a ruin, and also beautifully situated, with its neighbouring water and sheltering hills. But the most interesting of all is, in some respects, the ruin of the old church in Egleshay. It is difficult to say when it was constructed; probably in the ninth century. It is a perfect ruin, conspicuous for its round tower, of which there are so few specimens in existence. Nothing but the walls of the church remain, but they are substantial, and are likely to see out many a generation to come.

The ruin is surrounded by a more modern dry stone wall, a few feet in height. Rough stones have been formed into steps by which the enclosure is reached. Here are many gravestones with inscriptions more or less curious. One, I remember well, recorded the death of the schoolmaster, who for nearly forty years had lived his quiet life upon the island, teaching the children of the scanty population, seeing no change, knowing nothing of the rise and progress of the outer world. Who can divine his thoughts and aspirations during that long life? Was he content to vegetate and sink from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age and the grave, oblivious of the world, whose far off roaring could reach him not even in imagination? Or did he long, until the longing, like a fire whose intensity the more

quickly consumes itself, died out, to get away into that world, to see its kingdoms and to know its people? I know not; but as I read the record of that long, quiet, eventless life, a feeling of appalling silence and solitude fell upon me, more deep and real than the silence of the grave itself.

In that day, as in this, there was a schoolhouse upon the island, but no church. Sunday after Sunday the primitive inhabitants would get into their boats and row across to the neighbouring island of Rousay, to attend service. This over, the little band of worshippers would get back into their boats and row homewards, and spend the rest of the day in such peace and quietness as we cannot know. It must have been, it must be still, a pleasant sight. This little cluster of boats starting across the water with its living freight of youth and age each returning Sunday, to attend service in one or other of the churches of its more favoured sister island.

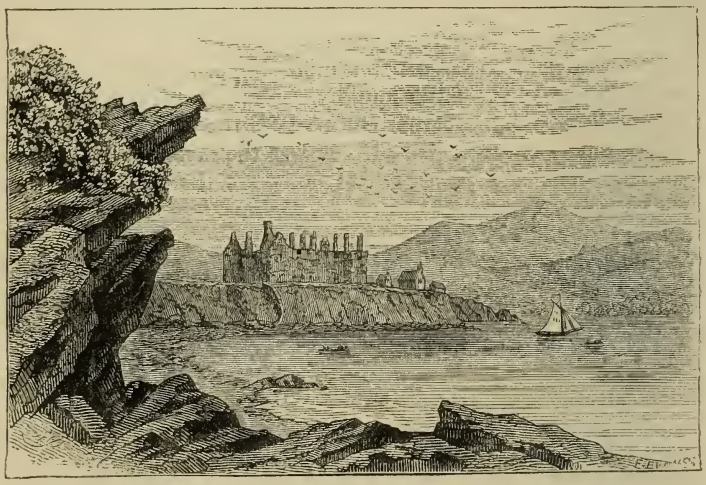
But Rousay is also larger and more important than Egleshay. The latter is small; two miles long by one mile at its broadest point. Yet it has played a more important part in the history of the Orkneys than many a larger island. It was the favourite residence of the ancient earls and bishops. It possesses the ruin of the most ancient church. It was here that St. Magnus was murdered by his wicked and ambitious cousin.

We went on our way that Saturday morning, and nothing of its kind could have been more delightful. There was wind enough to fill our sail, and send us along at something like good speed. The sky was cloudless. The smooth water was clear and transparent, so that we could see quite far into its mysterious depths. The water reflected all manner of colours: "rainbow-coloured tints" that charmed the eye. We had possession of the seas. I do not think we passed one boat, even a fisherman. Once or twice, it is true, we saw in the far-off distance, in the opening that separated one island from another, a large vessel with her sails all set, speeding before the wind, bound north or southwards; and that was all. Our own seas we had to ourselves. The day had risen unexpectedly in its beauty, and for this reason, perhaps, no other craft had ventured out.

As we neared Egleshay, it was impossible to avoid being struck by the beauty of its aspect. The ruin of the church, looking towards Rousay, was a conspicuous and picturesque object, carrying you back in one moment to ages, and men, and deeds that are buried in the centuries, and have their record in the middle ages. The elevation of Egleshay and its outline was marked by a long rim that cut the sky with scarcely any undulation. Across the water, dignified and beautiful, stood Rousay. As it appeared on that bright day it was the most pleasant looking of all the islands of Orkney I had yet seen. The land rose to a much greater height than Egleshay; indeed it is one of the highest of the group; and was broken by

valleys and undulations to which variety lent its charm. It is said that in no part of the island is there a level plain. It was apparently cultivated and fertile, and possessed nothing of the barren, naked look that distinguishes so many of the islands. No wonder, with such an object in prospect, that Egleshay had once been the favourite resort of the earls. Like all the other islands, Rousay possesses no trees, but is said to be well stocked with game, and its lakes and rivulets with trout.

It was a matter of some difficulty to land at Egleshay: difficult to get sufficiently near the shore and not strike aground or run foul of some concealed rock. An edge of grey rock terminated and surrounded the island, upon which grew multitudes of white-shelled



Palace of Birsay.

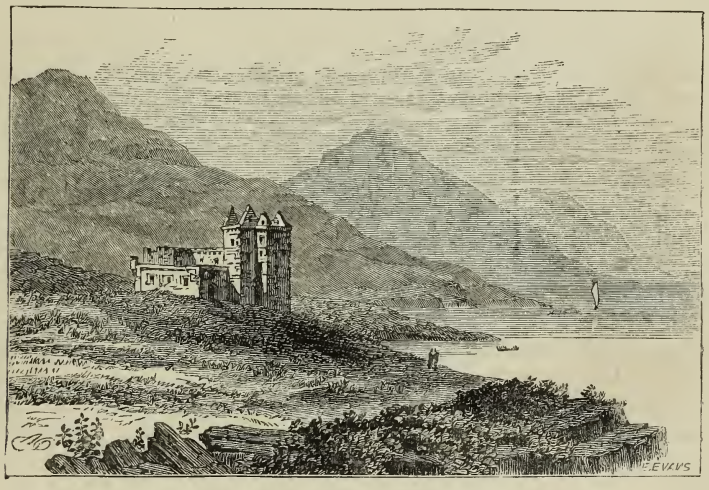
limpets, which are considered not fit to eat by the people, and magnificent seaweed. Near shore the water was of the utmost transparency, tinted here with exquisite aqua marine, there with dark purple. Looking into the shallow depths, the eye rested upon the bottom. Beautiful anemones, and variegated seaweed, and curious shells arrested the attention. It was a kingdom worthy of fairyland; more wonderful than anything of its kind I had ever seen on the western shores of England or elsewhere.

We landed at last, and one of the boatmen accompanied me on my walk to the church. Anything more solitary than the island could not well be found. We appeared to have it all to ourselves: no living creature was visible. Here and there a little Orkney house or hut, built after the prevalent Orkney fashion of dry stone walls, reared its head; but where the two hundred people or more, said to inhabit the

island, stow themselves, it was difficult to conceive. The island is well cultivated, and is improving under the hands of time and care.

We had about a mile to walk, and over not very even ground. Every now and then we came to a marshy spot, artfully concealed, that landed us up to our ankles in water, the only drawback to our pleasure. For there was something in the desolate solitude of the island that carried its own peculiar charm. Whether it would have survived the strain of a lengthened sojourn remains perhaps a not very difficult problem to solve. What must it have been for the schoolmaster after forty years?

We reached the ruins at last, and spent some time amongst them; one of us at least yielding to the influence they threw over the mind



NOLTLAND CASTLE, WESTRAY.

like a charm or a dream: contemplating and realizing with a species of second sight the scenes that took place here when the bold Norsemen ruled the seas and islands with their rough sway. Then the boatman—who had not visited the ruins for years—went off to a neighbouring farm-house for a draught of milk to quench his thirst. Unlike the Shetland Sandy, he was in reality a teetotaler, and had refused all offers of beer. Much honour he did the system, for a finer specimen of his genus could not easily be found. In these islands, wherever you wander, if you enter a cottage and ask for a glass of water, they would think it inhospitable to bring you anything but milk. As a rule they will accept nothing in payment.

We left the ruins and gradually got back to the boat. The man in charge had piloted her round into a tiny natural creek, more convenient for putting off. As we did so the wind began to drop. We

crossed the water and cruised round about Rousay, until the wind grew less and less and our prospects of getting home diminished. Had the wind kept up, it would, as the boatman had said, have run us into Kirkwall harbour in less than an hour. But it fell almost to a calm, and our progress was of the slowest. Evening was drawing on apace. Here and there we passed a rock crowded with gulls or cormorants. Now a cormorant would take wing from one island, and with immense strength and speed take a long flight to another, skimming the surface of the water.

Black and cruel they look with their long necks stretching ahead; and cruel enough they are when they get hold of their prey. But seated in the water, or perched upon rocks, their long necks stretched upwards, they are rather pretty birds: sharp-eyed apparently as an outpost. Yet it is the gull that acts as sentinel to the cormorant, and gives warning of the approach of danger, though seemingly the less vigilant species. A flock of cormorants is never seen perched upon a rock without a gull, who acts as watchman to the whole party. When danger approaches you see the sharp yet soft eyes of the gull and the beautiful little head twisting and turning about and calculating how long he may defy the enemy. The cormorants are motionless, and without the sanction of the gull make no attempt to move. Suddenly the gull sees the time has come, he makes a quick dart away, and is immediately followed by all his black companions.

We had no gun with us that evening, and the birds were sharp enough to know it. So, though we several times approached very near to a rock, out on the bold sea, the birds opened their eyes and blinked at us, and, nodding their heads as much as to say good night, quietly settled down again. Now a porpoise would roll past us, an object of no great beauty. Then the light went out of the sky, and with darkness came a dead calm. We were cold and shivery. The men took down the sail and took up the oars. The steamer from the North Isles passed us and went into Kirkwall. The light from the end of the pier gleamed out red and fiery, and seemed to defy us ever to reach it. But we did so at last between ten and eleven o'clock at night: quite four hours out of our reckoning, through the fickleness of the wind. I was not sorry to get back to the hotel; to see a fire blazing in my small sitting-room provided by the thoughtful landlord; a snow-white cloth upon the table, and a little supper waiting, than which no little supper was ever more thankfully greeted. This was my pleasantest day in the Orkney. For long it left a charm behind: a charm only to be realized by those who have breathed the exquisite air of a warm, fine day in these latitudes, and noted—what has already been alluded to—the wonderful colouring and combined effects and blending together of earth and sea and sky.

A few days later on, the great event of the year in Kirkwall took place: the Lammas fair. Scott makes some of the leading incidents

in "The Pirate" turn upon this occurrence, or rather he made it the occasion for shifting the scenes and characters of his novel from Shetland to Orkney. It was a very different journey in those days. Then there were no steamers to defy wind and tide. Starting from any port you never knew at what period you might reach your destination: days might elapse, or weeks. So when the old Udaller and his fair daughters, Minna and Brenda, embarked from Shetland, they were happy in possessing the swift breezes of the novelist to land them in due time on the shores of Orkney.

Perhaps the town of Kirkwall has changed less than most other things about the mainland. Generations have passed away; agriculture has somewhat relieved the barrenness of the soil. But the cathedral was there, looking very much as it looks now; and many of the houses were there that we see to-day. Thus, they who have been to Orkney can easily and accurately picture the scenes and incidents that occupied the hearts and minds of the sisters. It is easy, also, to picture the weird and powerful face and figure of the interesting but unhappy Norna, haunting the precincts of the cathedral, concealing herself behind its massive pillars, flitting in the dead of night amongst the gravestones, and mysteriously appearing and disappearing by means of her secret passages, defying sentries, and striking terror to their hearts by her apparently supernatural power.

The fair, too, has gone down since the days of which Scott wrote. It was then a great event. It lasted a fortnight, and brought people from all the neighbouring islands and from some parts of Scotland. Kirkwall, for the time being, would be a scene of the liveliest and most crowded dissipation, such as it knows nothing of in these later times. In vain we should look to-day for the type of the old Udaller. Magnus Troil lives only in the past and in Scott's pages. Vainly we search for such a character as Bryce Snailsfoot amongst the merchants of the fair. He, too, has departed with the better men. Nothing half so interesting could be found. Would it be too much to add, no conscience so elastic?

Nevertheless, the fair yet exists; and though no longer what it was, it is still the exciting and important event of the year in Orkney. It brings a large number of people from the surrounding islands. Boat after boat, sailing or steaming, conveys its freight of living creatures, biped and quadruped, to the mainland. It is chiefly a cattle fair, and a large number of horses and other animals are bought and sold. Young men and maidens make it their annual holiday, and pass the time in merry-making, love-making, and flirting to their hearts' content. How many matches are made and marred at these times who shall assert?

The fair is held on Wideford Hill, about a mile out of the town of Kirkwall. A long hill that gradually ascends to a considerable height, and lies to your left hand as you stand upon the pier looking seawards. The quiet town on these two days was a scene of noise

and confusion. The houses and inns were crowded, and I wondered how my landlord managed to keep his own premises so quiet and respectable. Crowded, too, was the long narrow street that chiefly composes the capital. Songs, and loud laughter, and music—especially the bagpipe—predominated. It has been said, "Oh, that mine enemy had written a book," and it might be varied by, "Oh, that mine enemy were haunted by a bagpipe." A band of three musicians drove me nearly wild. A fiddle, a double bass, and a species of Irish harp, that went up and down the street, and down and up, hour after hour, playing the twice dismal refrain of "The Mistletoe Bough," and nothing else. It was almost enough to drive a whole town melancholy mad.

I went up to the fair one afternoon—partly from curiosity, partly from the duty each owes to himself of seeing all that can be seen. Events that are opportunities seldom repeat themselves. I certainly do not ever wish to undergo again the opportunity or event of a Kirkwall fair. It may be seen once without regret: never twice. So I went through the long street, past the cathedral and the post office, out of the town, and up the road leading to Wideford Hill. It was quite unnecessary to ask the way. Every vehicle of every description that the town could boast, almost to a wheelbarrow; every living creature that bore the faintest resemblance to a horse, and possessed four available legs or even three, had been pressed to the rescue. Conveyances that held ten people were made to do duty for twenty. It was an amazing sight. Now a horse, tired and jaded, would stand still in the middle of the road, and refuse to move any further; the driver would shake the reins, probably made of rope, and beat up the animal with a whip minus a lash, therefore useless. The whole party in despair, at their wits' though not at their journey's end, would rise in a body and shout with one voice, only to terrify the unlucky quadruped into rigid paralysis. Another load, more fortunate, would spin along at a rate that exhilarated the inmates to uproarious mirth, whilst they would look back with cruel jeers at the paralyzed vehicle. But the greater portion of carts and conveyances proceeded at a funereal pace, willing to bide their time and reach the end when it came.

Boys and men were astride horses they hoped to see the last of that day; and now and then a simple-looking youth somewhat recalled the figure of Moses Primrose, but without the chance of the gross of silver-rimmed spectacles at the end of the day's work. It was a long, continuous procession; the stream of foot passengers filling up the picture. A more motley throng could not well be conceived. A very large number were from the neighbouring islands, and their costumes were extraordinary from their primitiveness, the ingenuity of the cut, and the variety of their colours. The women and girls were marvellous visions, and as they moved along in a body, looking like a painted rainbow in progress. On a fine day the

effect would have been dazzling; but the weather was dull and chilly.

Nearing the summit of the hill, and the fair, the first object to arrest attention was an intoxicated piper, so far overcome that he had thrown himself on the wayside bank, with his face in the wet grass, kissing the cold earth. Sundry youthful prodigies had hailed his state with delight, and seizing upon his bagpipes, were playing him into a state of still more senseless sleep. And oh, the happiness of insensibility amidst such unearthly uproar.

Then came the fair. It was a medley. Drinking booths had been erected and were much patronised. Whisky was in deep demand, and down long tables sat men and women drinking some sort of brown liquid out of very small tumblers. I wondered what the precious doses could be, and soon discovered they were nothing rarer than beer. There were merry-go-rounds, patronised by those who had apparently long passed their youth, yet had not reached years of discretion. "Il faut payer pour ses plaisirs." The men had to work as well as pay for their pleasure, for the horses were so many velocipedes, and the whole concern only went as fast as it was worked: a clever idea on the part of the envied proprietor. Stalls abounded, in which concertinas and other attractive articles were being sold, at a price that would land the seller the next week in the workhouse, if sundry and oft repeated statements might be relied on. Many of the men were silly from the quantity they had consumed; many others had reached a more advanced stage. Noise, uproar, and confusion. A few yards further on, seeming strangely out of place, a group were singing psalms and hymns in most sepulchral tones; whilst the leader every now and then addressed his hearers, taking refuge in another hymn whenever his ideas grew scanty or his words confused. Beyond all, in different parts of the wide plain, horses were standing about singly or in numbers, waiting purchasers. But the great business of the day to the larger part of the people, was to laugh and have what they thought fun, and drink far more than pockets would sanction or heads could carry.

So it went on for an eternity of two days; business diminishing, but not so pleasure seekers, drinkers, or the stock of ale and whisky. The latter, apparently, seemed like the enchanted well: the more water that was drawn, the more there was to draw. Happy for them had the supplies been nothing stronger than water. Many of the girls of the country had really pretty faces and almost graceful figures. Others, on the contrary, were a dream of ugliness; almost impossibly ugly; ill-favoured and ill-formed by nature; of that peculiar type rarely, if ever met with, except in places inaccessible to the world at large. I had very soon had quite enough of Lammas fair. Wonderful, indeed, must be the alteration since the days of Minna and Brenda Troil and the old Udaller.

As I returned, the piper was still lying with his face in the wet

grass; the boys were still performing upon the pipes with a sound that might have waked the dead or roused the Seven Sleepers, but could have no effect upon the sleep born of whisky. No draught of chlorate was ever so deep and senseless. I wended my way back to the town. As I went, the proverbial mist fell; the aspect of things changed; all surrounding objects were shut out. Young men and women drew very close together in couples under umbrellas: the same old story, though up in Orkney. But no umbrella could keep out the damp, penetrating mist. It did not rain, or attempt to rain, but when I reached the inn I was wet through and cold; with a cold far more unpleasant than that of a sharp frost in a dryer clime.

The mist cleared away by night; the people came down from the hill; the streets were full of noisy loungers. It was a wonder where they all slept. The town could not expand, yet here was a visitation that might have put many a larger place upon its mettle. But no doubt they all found a resting-place somewhere: in stables, over lofts, under counters: bathing machines there were none. By midnight or one in the morning, Kirkwall had sunk to a well-earned repose; the streets were deserted; the houses blinked at each other; the cathedral stood amidst solemn silence—the silence of the tomb; of eight centuries.

Two days later I again saw the piper going through the town. His progress was a triumph. He was still intoxicated, but was just able to tack, like a ship sailing against the wind. He was playing his bagpipes furiously, and a long tail of boys followed at his heels, hurrahing and cheering. The man seemed in the seventh heaven of delight! supremely happy; and none the worse for his late sleep upon mother earth.

LA TOUR DU LUC.

THE Breton town of St. Gildas is remarkable for its ugliness and for the tradition that the "subtle doctor," Abailard, was once abbot of its ancient monastery. The country around St. Gildas consists mostly of well-cultivated plains, flat and treeless. If you walk a couple of miles along the coast, you will come upon the old Château and demesnes of the Comtes du Luc. The Château is a sturdy structure; a mixture of strength, beauty, and, some say, bad taste, built in the romanesque and pointed gothic styles of architecture. The grounds are exquisitely laid out, and the base of the wide terrace is washed by the waves of the Atlantic.

The Comtes du Luc were always deemed to be the proudest of the proud: "Roi, je ne puis, Duc, je ne daijne, Du Luc, je suis." This had been the motto of their house. After the revolution of '93, they had again raised their heads—when few of their order had heads to raise—haughty as before. But under the second Empire, the pride of their house had a fall. Gaston, Comte du Luc, deserted the cause of Henri V.; and to the horror of the Faubourg St. Germain, haute volée, accepted a post at the Imperial Court, and plunged into the ultra-brilliant society which filled the salons of the ruling party.

But he died. And the discovery, made after his death, that his estates were seriously involved, however much it might have gratified his former party, who looked upon him as a renegade, was an intense surprise to all the world. How could he have got out of his money? He had been thought rich; and the Du Luc property was very valuable. Some people said it must have been "high play," others, that he must have gone in for private speculation.

The late Comte du Luc's steward and notary, one Monsieur Georges Bellemine, who chiefly resided at St. Gildas, appeared to have the papers and accounts all en règle. He did not, he said, know how the money had been spent; his late master had never enlightened him; but spent it was, and the Château sold. Sold? Yes, the last mad act that Monsieur le Comte had done was to demand the title deeds from him, and sell the château and all pertaining to it: and he had finished up, no doubt, by spending the money. Any way, the Château was shut up, and had passed away from the Du Lucs.

These very unpleasant matters had been communicated to the new heir, Hervé du Luc, by letters from the steward. The young Comte, who had been educated in Paris, and, like his father, resided there, feeling perhaps that he was unable to cope with this blow, sent a relative to St. Gildas to enquire personally into matters with the

steward. All that this relative could gather was, that the late Comte *had* spent the money, that the steward was angry he should not have confessed it before he died, instead of leaving upon him the onus of declaring it afterwards, and that there would be a very small income indeed for the present Comte: only a score or two of pounds a year.

Pleasant! Hervé du Luc was not yet twenty-five, was handsome, accomplished, intellectual. He found it very hard to give up the delights of a Paris life. Not those delights which enervate the mind, and which all good and sober people must condemn; the young Comte had no taste for such things: but the delights of the large libraries, of scientific music, and of the best and most refined society that the gay capital affords.

He could not fathom this terrible blow which had so changed all his prospects. One moment he would feel convinced that some treachery must have been at work; the next, he felt that, whether or not, he must accept things as they were, rather than by any enquiry bring some hideous ill-doing to light, which would throw discredit upon his late father's name. His first step now must be to see the notary and try to make out something or other from him.

So he wound up his life in Paris, gave up the house there, bid adieu to his best friends, and departed for St. Gildas. He found the Château shut up indeed. But—where was the agent?

Monsieur Bellemine had gone travelling, he was told. Having no longer occupation in the place, he had left it and was going about with his daughter to see the world. This hasty departure struck the young Comte as strange. From that moment he strongly suspected M. Bellemine. Some instinct told him that he had been the wolf in sheep's clothing who had ruined his father: though he did not yet feel sure that he might trust to the instinct.

The young Comte was not known at St. Gildas, not having been there since his childhood. Once his education had begun, his father removed him to Paris, and he had never visited the Château since.

About a mile from the Château, stood a ruined tower, called La Tour du Luc. It was all that remained to him of the homes of his ancestors. That old Tour had not been sold with the rest: perhaps M. Bellemine had forgotten it; or perhaps the new purchaser had not thought the ruinous old thing worth his attention. Old Babette, once the housekeeper at the Château, had taken refuge in the tumble-down place with her two sons, and nobody interfered with her.

It was built on arches, on a narrow strip of land that jutted into the ocean. At high tide the sea entirely covered this strip, and in stormy weather surged under the arches with a force that shook the whole structure. Why it had ever been built in such a place none of the present generation knew; any more than they knew why it was not sold with the Château.

To this old tower, Hervé du Luc betook himself. Babette nearly fainted with surprise the night of his arrival. *She* knew him:

she had been to Paris between whiles during her late master's lifetime.

"I am come to live here, Babette," he said. "For a time, at any rate. I shan't give you much trouble. And remember, please, that I am *Monsieur Hervé;* nobody else. It may be as well not to declare myself to the good people around at present."

So, in that time-worn old tower on the coast of Brittany, Hervé du Luc took up his abode. He was looked upon as Babette's lodger: as some young bourgeois who was passably well off and liked to live in quiet and enjoy the pure sea air. He had his books, his violin, his long walks for amusement, and made acquaintance with the peasants and fishermen, as M. Hervé. Only Babette and her stalwart sons, Jean and Louis, knew him to be the young Comte du Luc. Those were his amusements. His *business* was to seek proofs to verify, or the contrary, his suspicions of Georges Bellemine.

He searched here, he enquired there. He made friends with the new notary who had taken to Bellemine's business; aided by Babette and some keys in her possession he went into the Château in secret, examined papers, visited closets and archives. And thus the time went on.

II.

One morning, as Babette was preparing the galettes for M. Hervé's breakfast, her son Louis came into the tower. The two young men had established themselves on a small farm near the tower, but ran in every day, being dutiful sons, to see their mother. The tide was out this morning, and Louis had walked across the sands.

"Well, my son?" cried the old lady.

Louis did not respond. He had the aquiline nose, oval face, and dark eyes of the Breton: and he had also the Breton taciturnity.

Therefore Babette thought nothing of his silence: she was used to it. She turned the galettes with a flat shovel and began putting the smoking buck-wheat cakes on a plate. Then she had leisure to speak again.

"Well, Louis?"

"They have come," said Louis, shortly.

"They? Who?"

"Monsieur Bellemine and Mademoiselle."

Babette, shovel in hand, stared at him.

"Come where?"

"To the Château. Came last night. Are going to live in it."

"Bah!" said Babette. "This white flour was not ground from blé noir, my son. They may *live* in it, but not as its masters."

"But they have come as its masters. Pierre Cardac told me so."

Babette pushed back her grey hair. Her wrath was rising.

"Pierre Cardac went to the Château last night, and was engaged

by M. Bellemine as servant. Monsieur and Mademoiselle mean to keep up state in it—just as the late Comte did in his younger days."

"You have been drinking, Louis!"

"My mother, you know better."

"Pierre Cardac was drunk, then, when he said it."

"Nonsense, mother! Pierre Cardac drinks only the two-sous cider. The Bellemines are going to have their carriages and lord it in purple and fine linen, Pierre says. Mademoiselle——"

Babette rushed at her stalwart son and tried to shake him.

"How dare you, Louis? *They* at the Château du Luc keeping state, and our young Comte in this miserable, ruinous, water-soaked tower! Would heaven permit *that*, do you think? The Bellemines are not fit to tie the shoes of Monsieur le Comte du Luc."

"All the same, they are at the Château," returned Louis, stolidly, "and you can go out after Monsieur's breakfast is served and see for yourself. And Pierre says they are going to be grand."

Babette trembled ominously. She wished Louis was a little boy again, that she might shake him to some purpose.

"I saw Mademoiselle Marguerite on the beach just now," went on Louis. "She is quite a woman grown, and more beautiful than ever. Her father might have played the rogue, as you think, mother: I'm sure I don't know about that: but she knows it not if he did. She is mild, and sweet, and good—just an angel."

This was the climax. Louis had to dodge beyond reach of his mother's shovel. Old Babette had not been so angry for years.

"You vaurien!" she exclaimed. "You are like all men, Louis—a vaurien: a pretty face is everything with you. Mademoiselle may look nice, but what's her father? Can a thistle bring forth figs, I ask you? Did you not hear M. le Curé ask the self-same thing only last Sunday? Your Monsieur Bellemines and your Mademoiselles, indeed! Why, you must be growing wicked!"

Louis stood twisting his hat in perplexity. With the best intentions in the world, he had raised this storm. He had never thought his mother so unreasonable before.

"There, go along with you to your work, Louis. What are you idling your day here for to recount your ridiculous tales? And, just hark! don't tell this news to Monsieur Hervé, should you chance to see him. It's not so good but that he may be allowed his own time to find it out. Don't tell anybody."

Louis nodded assent. The old dame went up to serve her master's breakfast, and kept her own counsel. And so M. Hervé remained in ignorance for some length of time to come, of what so much concerned him.

Chance, or fate, or whatever the reader may decide, brought him this very first day into contact with Marguerite. They met on the sea-shore. Hervé, wandering about there, came in view of a young lady seated half way up the rocks. She had just dropped a small

basket that contained moss. He picked it up and handed it to her by means of his stick. She blushed and thanked him. It was the sweetest voice he had ever heard, and decidedly the sweetest face he had ever seen; and Hervé wondered who in the world she was and where she had come from. From St. Gildas, he supposed.

But Pierre Cardac's report about the grand doings that were to set in at the Château proved to be a false one. Monsieur Bellemine probably was at the château, but he kept himself closely shut up. There were no carriages, no servants (save Pierre Cardac and a woman who had been Marguerite's nurse), no visitors; no anything. For all people saw or knew, the château might be empty still.

If Monsieur Bellemine had been guilty of unorthodox practices for the purpose of getting the Château into his hands, the probability was that the practices had served him a scurvy trick, in taking from him all power to enjoy his possessions. It is so sometimes. He complained of being ill, confined himself to his chamber, and would scarcely ever admit his daughter. Poor Marguerite, innocent as the day of all wrong and suspicion of wrong, believed her father but occupied the Château as locum tenens for its present owner—whomsoever he might be. There was no comfort, no companionship for her indoors, and she took to pass a great deal of her time without. As to Pierre Cardac, he probably had received his orders; for he said no more to anybody, since that communication to Louis the first morning, about M. Bellemine being at the Château, but was as close as wax.

In his walks abroad, in his callings-in at the homes of the peasants, the huts of the fishermen, Monsieur Hervé very frequently saw the same young lady who had so won upon him at first sight. He was always catching glimpses of her fair young face in profile, or of her blue eyes glancing timidly away from his. When he did not see her he heard of her: for she was ever performing some good or kind action for the poorer homes, or teaching the farmers' wives to embellish the better ones. Plants began to bloom at windows; older children learnt to make pretty toys for younger; unsightly heaps of dust disappeared, and patches of ornamental garden-ground came up instead. Hervé thought of the heroine of some old ballad, under whose feet violets sprang when she touched the ground.

He did not know who she was. The peasants called her "Mademoiselle Marguerite." If any amidst them knew her for Bellemine's daughter, they suppressed it: and it is probable they did not know. He and his name were hated in the neighbourhood, for he had exercised petty tyranny: and who would have associated this angel of goodness with him? Marguerite had lived away of late years in the convent where she was educated. Mademoiselle Marguerite was just an angel, the wives said to M. Hervé; and he thought so too.

One day he asked Babette who this Mademoiselle Marguerite was. Some young girl, she supposed, who was staying in the neigh-

bourhood—perhaps come for the sea air, answered Babette. *She* was not curious herself, thank heaven. Monsieur knew the story of Mother Eve? The young lady was just Mademoiselle Marguerite, and nothing else. Hervé took the hint: he concluded the young lady, or perhaps her friends, did not want to be known. But that fair, sweet face haunted his dreams.

He grew angry with himself. What was this Mademoiselle Marguerite to him? Nothing. She could be nothing: for was he not a poor ruined man, who might not think of a wife? But what a lovely face it was!—and what thoughtful, liquid, earnest eyes she had! And so the dream began again.

"Our Monsieur Hervé is in love," said Babette one day to her elder son, the giant Jean, as she was preparing the second déjeûner.

"Oui dà," dutifully acquiesced Jean, who knew nothing about it.

"He has a great appetite of late. I know it by that."

"Perhaps his appetite comes from walking so much? I often see him about the rocks and on the beach."

"Tais toi, grand sot!" responded Babette. "Have I not been in love myself when I was young, and don't I remember the signs?"

It was quite true that Monsieur Hervé did walk very much. His eyes fixed on the sea, his brow thoughtful, he might have been seen almost any time pacing about during the day. The hope of meeting Mademoiselle Marguerite might have had something to do with it; but he had great food for reflection in his mind apart from her. Long before Monsieur Bellemine returned to the Château, Hervé had succeeded in discovering proofs of that worthy agent's underhand work, and proofs that were certainly most conclusive to him, though they might not have been deemed absolutely so in the eye of the law. A confidential friend, one of the great Parisian avocats, gave it as his opinion that it would be of no use to move in the matter yet. By waiting, more might be learnt.

Lost in a reverie, Hervé strolled along the coast late one afternoon, pondering this advice. He went towards the Château. He generally did go that way, perhaps from old association, perhaps because he should be more likely to meet Marguerite. Grey clouds covered the sky, except in the west, where the strong rays of the setting sun made them luminous with a colour that could only be called golden, but which was far brighter than any gold.

Something fell at his feet—first a handkerchief, then a book. Looking up, he saw Mademoiselle half way up the cliff. *Stuck* there. She was holding on to it, and the things had fallen from her hands. He ran to assist her.

"Mademoiselle Marguerite!"

"Monsieur Hervé," she answered, and laughed pleasantly as she let him take her hand. The frankness of her manner, so unlike that

of most French girls—the sweet, confiding simplicity with which she was wont to meet him, would of itself have won Hervé's heart. In truth, each was in love with the other, though they might know it not. She wore a silk dress, and had a dainty little white cloak on, lined with white silk. By several signs, Hervé had gathered that this young lady had wealth, and, he supposed—station.

"Thank you, sir," she said, as they got safely down and he seated her on the ledge facing the beach and the sea. "I know I ought not to have tried to get up that perpendicular path; but it is pleasanter and quicker than having to go round."

"Were you trying to get up? I thought you were coming down?"

"No; I thought I would try to get up. I might have known that I should get into difficulty. The old English lines came into my mind:—

'Fain would I climb,
But that I fear to fall.'

"Do you speak English, Monsieur Hervé?"

He smiled, and, in answer, quoted some lines of Scott's:

"'If a path be dangerous known,
The danger proves the lure alone.'"

But he spoke with an odd pronunciation. Her English was, on the contrary, perfect. The shadow of a smile sat on her lips.

"You do know English, then, monsieur."

"I am fond of reading it. As to speaking it, I can say, 'How do you do?' and 'Good morning.' Mademoiselle, I perceive, speaks it perfectly. Are you English?"

"No, but my mother was. She spoke it always with me when I was little; and we had an English lady in the convent, who taught us. So that I have never ceased to speak it, you see, with English persons."

Hervé had picked up the book. It was "Evangeline."

"Ah, a good, a great poet," he remarked. "But I don't like the Americans."

"Why not?"

"I—hardly know. Travellers invading their country give them an odd character."

"You have been reading Dickens, and Mrs. Trollope, and some of those Bohemian books," she laughed. "America will be a very great nation some time: meanwhile, its people have as good qualities as we have, and I like to read about them."

"I have often thought I should like to read this poem," he observed, pointing to the book on his knee—for he had sat down by her. "I have so much liked some of its extracts that I have seen quoted in books."

"I will lend it to you with pleasure," she said immediately. "Take it home with you, and give it back to me any time."

He thanked her warmly, and they sat on together in silence, each one feeling the charm of the hour and of the other's presence, and not perceiving the dusk that was coming on.

It came on rapidly. The luminous glow in the west, which had been growing fainter, was almost suddenly replaced by clouds of inky blackness. They spread themselves over the face of the sky. Marguerite suddenly observed it, and started up.

"Oh, dear! I did not notice that it was getting so late," she exclaimed. "I must say good evening, sir. I beg your pardon for running away so abruptly. I think we are going to have a storm."

"Nay," he answered, slipping "Evangeline" into his breast-pocket, "I shall see you safely to your home. Is it in the town?"

"The town! Oh, dear, no. I live here close by."

She walked swiftly along the beach to the proper ascending path, and went as swiftly up it, Hervé walking by her side. To his surprise, she turned to the Château, and opened a little private postern door in an obscure corner of the walls.

"Thank you, sir, very truly. I am at home now."

"But you do not live in the Château?" he exclaimed in amazement.

"Yes, I do."

M. Hervé could not help staring at her. "In the Château!" he repeated. "What, alone?"

"Oh no, not alone. My father is here. Good night, sir. Please don't stay; the storm is beginning."

Hervé made the best of his way to the tower through the blinding rain, the lightning, and the thunder. The warring elements did not seem half so much of a chaos as did his own heart. A most dreadful suspicion filled his mind. This girl, whom, as he knew now, he so deeply loved, who was she? His enemy's daughter?

In shaking his wet coat after he got in, he felt the book. Taking it out, he opened the window to admit of what little light still remained, and read her name on the blank leaf.

"A Marguerite Bellemine, de son père,
GEORGES BELLEMINE."

The name he loved and the name he hated!

He kissed the first name; and then, scarcely knowing what he did, he cast the book into the sea, through the open window.

"So goes my hope!" he muttered. "Dead in its birth! Oh, Marguerite! Marguerite!"

He strode his room like a madman: he felt almost beside himself.

"I *must* not love her. What!—love the daughter of the man who has ruined me? No! But I will give up all for her—she shall never know her father's treachery."

There was no sleep for the poor young Comte that night. He thought fortune was very cruel to him.

In the morning he was aroused by an unusual sound: that of weeping and wailing in the domains of Babette.

"What is the matter?" he asked, going forth.

The old housekeeper was waiting at the door for Hervé. Her dishevelled grey hair had straggled from under her snowy cap. Her eyes were red with weeping.

"Oh, Monsieur Hervé! Oh, Monsieur Hervé!" she cried, "the wrath of Heaven has come upon us! I am the most wretched woman in the world!" Choking sobs prevented her from going further.

"What is it, Babette?" asked Hervé, kindly, grasping her hands.

"My son!—my Louis! O Monsieur Hervé! He has drawn an unlucky number in the conscription! He must go!—he must leave me! I have no money to procure a substitute!"

"Neither have I," sighed Hervé.

"My Louis is lost! He will be killed!" wailed Babette. "He knew of this yesterday, but would not tell it me. Jean came and broke it to me this morning."

"Rest tranquil," Hervé said, abruptly. "He shall have a substitute. We will get him one somehow or other."

A curious idea had come into his own mind. Why should not *he* be the substitute? In this place he could not stay, subjected to seeing her at any moment; and where was he to go, if not to the wars, and what do? The object of his life, the bringing to light the treachery of Bellemine, was at an end, for he could not betray *her* father.

"I love her," he groaned, "she cannot be mine; life has nothing good to give but death."

And so Hervé, to the indignant amazement of Babette, went to serve in place of Louis. France was at war then.

III.

Peace. Time had elapsed, and the war was at an end.

Through the streets of St. Gildas, a pale, emaciated soldier dragged his weary feet. This soldier was Hervé du Luc, whose services had raised him to the grade of lieutenant.

Out towards the sea he went slowly, and along the coast, stopping to rest at frequent intervals. Hervé du Luc had been wounded, and left upon the battle-field for dead. Luckily, however, after he had spent a night of exposure, the fact that he yet lived was discovered by a frère chrétien, and he was cared for; but a delirious fever succeeded. He struggled gallantly with death, and at length quitted the hospital. His feet had brought him to St. Gildas.

He stands on the beach; he finds a seat and remains there in deep thought. Marguerite is as dear to him as ever—but he cannot see her—he will not—he must not.

The evening draws on, and all this while the tide is rising. In the west, purple clouds have succeeded to the sunset. Suddenly he

notices the rising water. He must make his way to the tower—from where he is, it is only knee deep—he must wade it.

And so he does. He reaches the rocky bed on which the tower is built; but the exertion has been too much for him. Sea, sky, and tower, whirl before his eyes. He stretches out his hand helplessly. He falls fainting on the rock.

A sullen sound comes from the ocean. The tide is rising rapidly, and, with it, the storm. In a quarter of an hour, the waves, foaming and fighting, will surge through the arches of the tower, and, if he does not waken, they will bury Hervé du Luc.

Babette, not liking the loneliness of the tower, had removed to a good-sized cottage near her sons. She has been sick for some little time past. The doors and windows are closed, for Babette thinks that air is not good for the sick. Marguerite Bellemine, in a plain dress of deep black, is reading the "Imitation" aloud. She and Babette are good friends now.

Monsieur Georges Bellemine was dead. About a month ago. He had confessed nothing: but, as his will left the Château and all its demesnes to his daughter, the world knew what to think. Marguerite was horrified. She put the parchments into legal hands, desiring that measures should be at once taken for restoring the property to the rightful owners—the du Lucs. A small income, derived from her dead mother, alone remained to her: she quitted the Château, and got old Babette to give her accommodation in her roomy cottage, until, as she expressed it, she could turn herself round. But for one thing, she would have gone straight to the convent for good. That one thing was Monsieur Hervé. She hoped to see him again some time: though he had gone out in the ranks.

Babette babbled of him constantly: of his probity, his goodness, the sacrifice he had made for her son, Louis: but she guarded his identity jealously, and never said a word of that. Had Marguerite known it, she would never have waited for him.

As Marguerite closed her book, and was about to go to her own sitting-room, Louis came in to see his mother. He bowed to Mademoiselle.

"Are we going to have a storm, Louis?" she asked.

"It will be a bad night," he answered. "Does Mademoiselle ask the question for anything in particular?"

"Yes," she said. "I wanted to go and see poor old Grandmère Chaillot: I promised her. Will you walk with me, Louis?"

They started. Mademoiselle did not like to break a promise to the poor and sick. Louis attended her as her escort. The lurid reflection that often precedes a storm, lighted up sea and sky.

"It will be a dreadful night," exclaimed Marguerite as they went along. "The sea seems to be trying to burst its bounds. Louis!—what's that? Somebody is clinging to the nearest arch of the old tower!"

"Where? what?" cried slow Louis, bewildered, and looking in every direction but the right one.

"Don't you see? Look! It is a man. His head and arms are just above the surface."

"Dame!" cried Louis. "So there is!"

"He is drowning! In a few minutes the waves must sweep him away. Oh, Louis, don't you see who it is? Don't you see his face? The boat, the boat! It is Monsieur Hervé."

Louis stared. His eyes were not quick, and he did not recognise the face: he thought Mademoiselle's fancy was deceiving her.

"The boat, the boat!" she reiterated. "Where's Jean? Fetch him."

"But Mademoiselle sees that the boat could not live in such a sea. It would be dashed on the rocks speedily. It's only a fisherman, Mademoiselle, and fishermen can always take care of themselves."

"The boat, the boat!" repeated Marguerite, running to the inlet where it was moored. "He *must* be saved."

"Better that one man should die than two," called out Louis, as he followed her. "As to Monsieur Hervé, it *can't be*, you know, Mademoiselle."

She was herself busy with the boat. "Oh, Louis, remember what he did for you!—he went out to fight in your place! Would you leave him there to die before your eyes?"

She had undone the knot that bound the boat to the stake. The oars lay in it, and she jumped in. Louis unwillingly followed her.

The frail shell was tossed on the crest of a high-mounting wave. Had it washed off what was clinging to the arch? Marguerite Bellemine closed her eyes and shivered. But the boat held on its way; Hervé saw it, and managed to wade through the surf and gain it.

"Under Heaven, Marguerite, you have saved my life," breathed Hervé, when he had strength to speak. "I give it to you if you will take it. I cannot live without you. We will go to some distant land, and ——"

Stolid Louis was crying. He had quite lost his head.

"Oh, Monsieur le Comte, my good and brave master, I did not know you! I would have left you to die! Yes, Mademoiselle, it is he—I am not mad—it has been himself all the while in disguise as plain Monsieur Hervé. He is nobody but the heir and our chieftain, Monsieur le Comte du Luc."

Marguerite clasped her hands. All her hopes were gone; she felt as if she could die of the news. But they did not notice her: the boat had to be attended to, if they wished to get safely to shore.

And then Hervé learnt what the upright and innocent Marguerite had done—restored his possessions. And *she* learnt that she was to be his wife, and the true mistress of the Château at last. His wife!—though he did not turn out to be plain M. Hervé, who went to the wars as a common soldier, but Hervé, Comte du Luc.

THE SIX RESOLUTIONS.

THE Rectory was the most comfortable house within the parish of Hipping Mead. The Rector, the Rev. Elam Martyn, was a widower with seven daughters, the eldest six-and-twenty, the youngest fourteen years old —he had been a widower some thirteen years.

The shackles of matrimony had fallen from his rather light nature, without leaving permanent regret. Not that his had been an unhappy married life, but his wife had been—and no detriment to his manliness either—the stronger will of the two. Still he felt the yoke in a quiescent sort of a way, and so when it fell from off him, unknown to himself, unacknowledged in his heart, the relief was sensible.

It came then, that at the age of thirteen, Gerty, his eldest daughter, took upon herself, with premature womanliness, the ordering of the household, and had remained ever since, as her father said, prime minister—a born administrator she was, and her father knew it. Never, from household disorganisation, had the Rector been once tempted, these thirteen years of widowhood, to cast a thought on second wedlock, and the very possibility of such a thing had never entered his daughters' heads.

The sisters lived in affection with each other, and at peace with their neighbours. The village watched over their rector's daughters with vigilant interest, knew their different dispositions and inclinations, and prized them accordingly.

Mothers of young girls intended for service eagerly sought to have them trained by Miss Gerty, whose efficiency in all domestic matters was well known and respected; but if anyone were sick it was Miss Sophie who was in demand.

If, however, sorer trouble than sickness fell on a household—not poverty, but disgrace through some near member, then it was Miss Nelly, her father's pet, who was appealed to. "A sign," said her father with dry humour, "that your own morals are rather lax, my girl." But Nelly argued that this was a disease, and might be cured by medicine, not surgery merely.

Again, if poverty visited a family, Mary the open-handed, soft, pitying Mary, was called to the rescue. That money was needed was all that Mary cared to know, the why and the wherefore were after considerations. Her father laughed, and called her proceedings Irish. "You give bread first," he said, "you weigh it afterwards." "People give a more attentive ear to wisdom," would Mary say, "when fed and clothed: hunger dulls the sense of morality."

But if Hipping Mead had a backward swain or a coquettish damsel, Miss Emmy was the one appealed to. For one short summer, when still in her teens, Emmy lived her little idyll of happy love, but when harvest time had been and gone, her lover was on the wide sea, and had bade her no farewell, so she had ever a plaintive, pleading voice, that brought together often, sundered lovers; a winning smile that had power with a wavering swain. And lastly, when Hipping Mead would be en fête, Gracey was in request. She it was who decked the May Queen, presided at tea feasts, joined heartiest in the rural games, and gave the prizes.

The seventh daughter, Amy, the last of the flock, was an invalid —the tender and special care of each of her loving sisters, and her father also.

It was the first week in October, and Mr. Martyn went to Harrington, a neighbouring parish, to indulge on a friend's acres in some unclerical sport, and to take a Sunday's duty.

As he was to be absent ten days, Gerty inaugurated a house cleaning, her usual "escape" for repressed energies. A week had elapsed since his departure, the actual cleansing process was over, but the things had not been replaced in their respective localities, orderly confusion reigned supreme—even confusion was orderly with Gerty.

The six sisters sat at the breakfast-table. Amy was on the sofa, the meal was just over, and Gerty was opening the post-bag. Its only contents that morning was a letter from the Rector, addressed to "The Miss Martyns." Rather surprised, Gerty, as the eldest, opened the letter. It was short; not half-a-dozen lines—she read it, and as if she could not help it, let it drop.

"Girls," she cried in a faint voice, "papa is married."

For a second or two no one spoke; then Nelly, with a white face, picked up the letter and read it aloud; it was as follows:

"My dear Daughters,

"This morning I married a widow with six children. She is a good manager, but the children are very unruly. I hope to be home on Saturday night.

"Your loving father,

"Elam Martyn."

The consternation at that breakfast-table baffles description. A sob broke from Nelly, it was re-echoed at intervals by her six sisters. They looked at each other blankly, then round the large and cosey room, taking a prospective farewell. Over the sideboard hung a full-length portrait of the late Mrs. Martyn. Gerty's eyes led the way to its contemplation, the six other pairs followed. Gerty exclaimed:

"My poor mother!" In different keys each voice repeated the lament.

"I shall at once go out as a lady-help," said Gerty, taking, as the eldest, the lead in declaring her intentions.

"A lady-help!" echoed her sisters, aghast.

"Yes; I am qualified for nothing higher in the labour mart," she said bitterly. "My education ceased when she," pointing to the deceased Mrs. Martyn, "died. Since then my only studies have been the bodily needs of my family. I shall never sit round at this board."

"Poor Gerty," sighed they all.

"And I," said Sophie, "I shall get Cousin Tom to take me into St. Luke's Hospital as nurse. Luckily for me, like Gerty, my family and the village have trained me well for my vocation; but papa will miss me when he has his gout, I know," and that expectation seemed to bring sudden consolation to Sophie, and gratification to the others.

"Such a nurse as you are!" they all cried. "Oh, it is a shame!"

Then Nelly, her father's favourite, wiping away her tears with an angry gesture, cried:

"Papa used to call me little Mrs. Fry. I think he was just prophesying, for I'll apply to the governor of St. Giles's Prison to be made a female warder. Bill Jones—Burly Bill, you know, has been often there, and he says the female warders are *quite* ladies, and live by themselves."

"Oh, Nelly!" they all exclaimed, "it is such an ugly dress. Your hair's all cut short, and you have to wear big keys at your side."

"I shall at any rate be useful," said Nelly loftily, "and not in *anybody's* way," and she relapsed into tears.

In a soft, deprecatory tone, Emmy took up her burthen.

"It is a world full of pain," she sighed. "Whatever our special vocations may be, man's universal aim seems to be crushing woman's best affections. I shall go as companion to old Miss Triniger, she has often asked me. Papa shall have a quiet fireside."

"Miss Triniger!" they all cried, horrified. "Oh, not Miss Triniger; she never sees a soul, and she is so crabbed, so selfish. Oh, not her, Emmy."

"I am patient," said Emmy, with the air of expectant martyrdom.

With a decidedly more cheerful voice, quavering between a smile and a tear, Mary the governess—the tender-hearted Mary—announced her intentions.

"I shall marry Cousin Tom," she said. "I didn't like to be the first to break our happy circle, but he wanted me to marry him months ago, so I'll do it now."

"Oh, Mary!" they exclaimed, one after the other, "oh, Mary dear, we are so glad." And then they all wept together. In a little time they dried their eyes and looked at Gracey, who had made no sign of delivering her resolution.

"And you, Gracey," they said, "what will you do?"

"Sisters," she replied very quietly, "I shall stay here."

"Here!" they echoed in different keys of astonishment and resentment.

"Yes," she repeated, "here. If papa will not need me, Amy will. You forget Amy."

"Amy," said each in a shamed whisper. And then they all rose together, all but Gracey, and gave the fragile invalid on the sofa a pardon-asking kiss.

"Gracey is right," they said. "One of us must stay and take care of Amy." And they wished in their secret hearts that in their pride and anger, their wounded affections, their self-assertion and impulsive reprisals, they had not forgotten poor little feeble Amy.

Saturday night came, and round the tea-table the six sisters, Amy on the couch as before, awaited the arrival of their father.

The seat at the head of the board was empty, in ominous expectancy. Throughout the house a careless desolation reigned. The furniture deposed for the cleaning had not been reinstated; the two servants moved about like mutes, their voices sepulchral, their demeanour solemnly grave. The tea-table, usually so brightly inviting, was chill and formal-looking; no hot cakes or delicate preserves. Plenty there was, but the plenty of right, not of mindful love. No one spoke. Each watched the clock furtively. Seven struck, and three minutes after, the gravel was scattered against the windows, the bell was rung hastily, the door opened, and unmet, unwelcomed, but certainly not unexpected, Mr. Martyn returned to the bosom of his family. He was alone; his daughters rose simultaneously.

"Well," he cried, his eyes twinkling mischievously, "what has happened, Nelly?" and he looked at his favourite. "No kiss for papa, any of you girls?"

And then he counted them; beginning at Gerty he called each by name, till reaching Amy he cried:

"And Amy's seven. You're all here. And what a state the house is in," looking quizzingly round the room, "everything topsy-turvey: been frightened by ghosts?" he laughed. "Why, Peggy only half-opened the door to me, and Dan never opened his lips from the station to the hall door."

"Papa," said Gerty, severely, "why didn't you bring her in?"

"Who in?" and the rector's mouth twitched.

"The new mistress of Hipping Mead," replied Gerty, with a choke in her voice.

"Your wife, sir," said Sophie.

"Poor mamma's successor," sobbed Nelly.

"The strange woman," cried Mary.

"Mrs. Martyn," said Emmy, with convincing simplicity.

"The widow you married, sir," said Gracey reproachfully.

"And the six children," piped poor weak little Amy from the sofa.

"Good gracious," cried the rector, divesting himself of his outer coat. "A woman with so many individualities knew I never."

Then all in concert demanded:

"Did you not write and tell us that you had married a widow with six children?"

"Yes," replied the rector, laughing heartily, "yes, and so I did—but to another man."

The only one of the resolutions kept was Mary's. She did marry Cousin Tom, but she always declared she had been frightened into it.

TO HER IMPERIAL HIGHNESS PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF PRUSSIA ON HER MARRIAGE.

> "When her joy is at its fullest there shall mingle with her mirth
> All sweet and glorious memories of the land that gave her birth;
> In thought she still shall tread the soil whose thousand heroes stand
> Round the daughter of our England, the child of the old, old land."
>
> E. L. Hervey, 1858.

A voice—a voice from the old, old land, its daughter's child to hail,
Fresh op'ning bud of the flower we love on the hill or in the dale,
"May only the sea divide us"—that was the happiest thought,
Of all the true and hearty thoughts in loyal mottoes wrought,
When, twenty years ago, Princess, just twenty years ago,
Gay flags and salutations gleamed through drifting, dazzling snow.

The heart of a mighty nation then was one with the father's heart;
Conflicting with emotions strong, seeing its child depart.
As step by step, going down with the Bride—down the decorated pier,
The watching eye of the people shone through the sympathising tear.
Proudly the Maids of Kent then stood, as Britain's own right hand
Strewed the last roses on her path, upon her native land.

Full well that Princess knew and felt what the roses were to say
Of blessing, and of fervent prayer to follow her all the way.
On to the distant lovely home, above the Havel bright;
On through the unknown future, through each unseen day and night;
On—onward still prayer reaches Heaven, and blessings come through prayer,
Go with us to our journey's end: we learn their value there.

Now let us greet the Royal Bride and Bridegroom of to-day
With fullest and with warmest wish our English tongue can say.
May their future be as happy as her parents' life has been,
A wedded life of faithful love through every changing scene;
While storms of war and wild distress raged through a night of sorrow,
While sunbeams struggled through the clouds upon the glorious morrow!

E. H. Hudson.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

STOLEN INTERVIEWS.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER X.

THE QUARREL.

THE round grey stone building, not large, but very old, called the Keep, stood near to the back of the Abbey of Pomeroy, its walls overgrown with moss. A gentle slope of green grass descended from it, then came a level dell, and then, on another gentle slope rose the rear, or west pile of the abbey. This rear had neither entrance nor window; no look-out of any kind: you must travel round to the front before you could get in.

Sitting near the Keep on the dry and warm grass one hot day in the beginning of October, was the lovely Lady of Pomeroy. She had thrown herself there in listlessness: for the old listlessnesses at times clung to her yet. Pacing the dell before her, was the nurse bearing the infant, now some two months old. The anticipated heir, so anxiously expected and for whom great rejoicings had been planned, had turned out to be a pretty little girl. The Lord of Pomeroy did not appear to care for the disappointment: better luck next time, he said. He loved the child just as much as he would have loved the heir; ay, and was as proud of it. The rejoicings were to be held all the same: they had been delayed until his wife should be thoroughly restored to strength. Then the invitations went out, and on the morrow the abbey would be filled with guests. Guy had taken advantage of his last day of leisure to ride to Owlstone: and his wife sat, as you see, on the grass, before the old and uninhabited Keep.

"Bridget, is the baby sleeping?"

"Just going off, madam."

"Then take her indoors."

Bridget moved towards the abbey with her charge. She had been promoted to the office of nurse to the child, simply because Mrs. Pomeroy had become fascinated with her tales and her legends of the dead-and-gone Pomeroys, belonging to the ages as dead-and-gone as they were. Bridget would recount to her marvellous legends of the Pomeroys' grandeur and chivalry, varied with whispers of the Pomeroys' less laudatory exploits. Mrs. Pomeroy took quite a liking for the woman, and she assigned to her the place of nurse to the child; herself being its nurse in one sense of the word.

Mrs. Pomeroy sat on, her parasol held over her right arm; that is, between her face and the sun. It was pleasant to recline there at her ease, enjoying the balm of the warm and tranquil air. A great bleak place the abbey looked, something like a prison; this west pile before her, having neither window nor outlet, nothing but its massive, unbroken, lichen-covered walls.

"Thank goodness, this solitude will be over to-morrow!" ejaculated Mrs. Pomeroy. "I can wear my new dresses, and there'll be people to see them. I'm sure I was quite well enough for company a fortnight and more ago, only Guy is so stupidly careful of me. How delightful it will be!"

Lost in this charming prospect—and to Mrs. Pomeroy, vain and frivolous, gaiety was always charming—she fell into a train of thought; from which she was aroused by the sound of footsteps behind her, hastening down the slope of the Keep. She turned her head, and—

What was it that dazzled her eyes, as if the glaring sun had suddenly flashed upon them? What was it that dazzled her mind to bewilderment? She rose up, little conscious what she did; her cheek flushed and paled, paled and flushed, her hands trembled, her heart grew sick and dizzy. Whose form was it, that caused all this emotion?

It was that of a noble-looking man, of the remarkable height, the well-turned limbs, the fine make of her own husband; indeed just for a moment she thought it was Guy, and wondered what brought him there. But no, it was not Guy: it was Rupert. Though much alike, Guy's countenance could not boast the remarkable beauty of this one, for Guy had his hare-lip, his stern look, and his unnaturally pale complexion. Yes, it was Rupert. Rupert whom she had not heard of, or seen, for two years.

Rupert Pomeroy drew a step back as she rose and turned her face to him: he had not observed her. She looked at him, not speaking, but she could not conceal the agitation which had taken possession of her whole frame: and he halted and stood before her. Alas! though she had resolutely thrust Rupert Pomeroy from her mind, and so believed she had thrust him from her heart, this sudden meeting served to show that the love had been only smouldering. She

covered her agitation with a look of scorn, for that was the chief feeling kept uppermost since she believed that he had wilfully played her false. Not less scornful, however, was the tone of Rupert.

"It is a surprise to me to meet the Lady of Pomeroy."

Again they stood gazing at each other, neither speaking. Mrs. Pomeroy remembered her position as the wife of his brother, and she struggled to maintain it as she ought.

"I believe I speak to Rupert Pomeroy?" she coldly said.

"Am I so changed that you need doubt it?" was his retort. "I should have thought, by the circumstances attending our last meeting, that you would only too well have remembered me. Have you forgotten that last meeting?"

She was thunderstruck at his audacity. "Do you know who I am?"

"To my cost I do know it. Guy's wife. But in that last meeting you swore to be mine. Alice," he continued, his voice trembling, "I trusted you from my very soul."

She could not comprehend; she advanced a step nearer to him. "Are you aiming to play off some deceit upon me again now, as you did then? To what end? You and I have nothing in common."

"Nothing?"

"Save hatred; contempt. They are what I feel for you."

He looked at her steadily, mockery in his eye and on his lip. She was excessively agitated; she could not understand his looks, his words. Instead of sinking to the earth with shame for his treachery, he appeared to throw blame and scorn on her.

"You are my husband's brother," she resumed, "and I will say to you what I would not stoop to say were I any other man's wife. Though it may be that you are utterly callous, impervious to reproach. You came in secret to my mother's home to win my love ——"

"And I thought I did win it."

"How dared you so come to befool me," she continued in agitation, waiving away his interruption, "dastardly pretending that your love was mine?"

"Dastardly!" retorted Rupert, his eye flashing; "I am a Pomeroy. Was it more dastardly in one brother to seek you, than in the other. What, though Guy was the heir?—had you wanted position and riches, why did you not say so?"

"I did not want them. You know I did not."

"You married them, at any rate, madam," he slightingly returned. "And you made pretty good haste to do so."

"This show of recrimination will not serve your purpose," resumed Mrs. Pomeroy. "I would like an answer before I have done with the subject for ever. Once more I ask for an explanation, and if you have a grain of honour you will give it—why you came, dastardly deceiving me with your false vows?"

"If you had aught about you as true as they were, you would do

Lady of Pomeroy. Whatever other ill I may have done, I loved you faithfully: as I have never loved and never shall love another."

"You may spare yourself the avowal, Rupert Pomeroy: to what end, I ask, lie about it now? I know who it was you did love—— while you pretended to love and visit me. But I am ashamed of myself for thus alluding to anything so disgraceful."

"As you have alluded to it you had better explain, madam. I do not know what you are speaking of. On my word of honour."

In Rupert's generally gay eyes there sat so earnest an expression that Mrs. Pomeroy felt staggered. Did he in truth not understand?

She dropped her voice. "Have you forgotten that unhappy person who—who ——"

"Pray proceed."

"Whom you took away with you?"

Rupert looked at her. "What person?"

"I know all about it.—I blush for myself that I should deign to allude to it again—but I wish you to understand that, though you succeeded in deceiving me for a space of time, the enlightenment came. Therefore we shall stand on equal ground for the future."

"I ask what person," he steadily repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Sybilla Gaunt," replied Mrs. Pomeroy, in a whisper.

After a stare of surprise, Rupert burst into laughter. Mrs. Pomeroy turned indignantly away.

He strode after her, and caught her by the arm. "Do you mean what you say, Mrs. Pomeroy? Is it possible that you suspect *me* of having abducted Sybilla Gaunt?"

"I do not suspect. I know it was you."

Her contemptuous manner had been telling upon him. "Then hear me," he said, almost as passionately as his brother Guy could have spoken. "I never had an ill thought towards Sybilla, I never had a grain of love for her; I swear it. You are entirely mistaken."

There was truth in his eye and in his tone. Mrs. Pomeroy turned ghastly pale. "Surely you knew that she fell into trouble?"

"I knew that. I suppose you ladies call it trouble."

Mrs. Pomeroy frowned. But she was in a very tumult of agitation, comprehending nothing, as it seemed, and could but pursue her questions.

"Did you know who was the author of it?"

"I did."

"Tell me, and I will believe all you say."

Rupert hesitated. "As to believing me, you must do as you please. If I ever spoke a word of truth in my life, I am speaking it now."

"Yes, yes, I do believe you. But you should not leave it in this uncertainty; you *must* tell me. Who was it?"

Still Rupert hesitated. "There exists a reason why it should not be known at Abbeyland. If I do tell you will you undertake to keep it secret?"

"I will."

"It was my brother George. Captain Pomeroy."

"Captain Pomeroy," she repeated below her breath. "Did he ——"

"Ask me no questions," interrupted Rupert. "I can tell you nothing but the bare fact that George was the culprit. Who was it that put you on the wrong scent?"

"Guy."

"Guy! Then I shall have a score to settle with him."

"He believed it was you. The village believed it."

"Guy did not believe it—whatever the village may have done. The village laid many a peccadillo on my back, being a broad one, that had no legal right there. What did I care? it made me none the sadder."

"Guy did not?" dreamily repeated Mrs. Pomeroy.

"Guy knew better. He knew as much as I did."

"Joan thought it," she continued. "My mother thought it."

"Very likely. I have a broad back, I say, and always have had one. Was this the reason that you broke your vows to me?"

"Yes," she answered, her pale lips quivering. "Guy came to me again one day, pressing me to be his wife: to get rid of his importunity I confided to him that I loved you, that I had promised to wait and be yours, and then he ridiculed my credulity, and told me you were the cause of all that had happened to Sybilla Gaunt. He said that Sybilla had followed you."

Rupert turned from her to give a few strong words to his brother. "And then you married him?"

"And then I married him. I was mad, Rupert: I did not care what became of me. He has played us both false."

"He has played us both false," echoed Rupert, "false as his own false nature. And yet I never knew it was false until now; for, with all his sternness, I took Guy to be the soul of honour. Let him look to himself!"

"But, Rupert, you never came, you never wrote," she pleaded, the tears running down her cheeks. "Why did you stay away in London all that while? What was I to think?"

Rupert coughed: conscience told him that he could clear himself less easily on this score than the other. But the best of us have excuses at hand.

"I stayed there hunting after that Government post which I expected. And, later, I got put into the Queen's Bench Prison: that must have been not long before your marriage. Do you know who put me there? Guy."

"Guy!"

"He did. In so far as that he would not advance a poor, small, pitiful sum, just a few hundreds, to keep me out of it. He wrote word to our lawyer that a little spell at the Queen's Bench would do me good."

"Oh, Rupert! It has been a black plot of treachery against us both."

"It has; and it succeeded. He won you by a lie! Let him look to himself."

Rupert spoke in a pointed manner. Mrs. Pomeroy had little doubt what it was he alluded to, and she shuddered as with a sudden fear. That wild prediction, bearing dread portent for the Lords of Pomeroy, and implicitly believed in—when one of them should win a wife by means of a lie—recurred to her.

Rupert Pomeroy touched with his forefinger Mrs. Pomeroy's shoulder. "You love me still," he dared to say. "Nay, no denial. I see it."

"From my whole heart," she answered, for indignation was strong within her; and she had begun to hate her treacherous husband with a deadly hatred.

Oh, foolish woman! Ill-trained, ill-regulated, devoid of conscience, though she surely must be, how could she make so dangerous and wicked an avowal? The next moment she repented of it herself, the little grace within her was making itself heard; and some shame was in her face as she said a hasty farewell to Rupert.

"Won by a lie," she muttered to herself, "won by a lie!"

Rupert told the truth. George Pomeroy was the culprit, not himself, and he had been in George's confidence throughout: had done his best to aid in keeping the affair a secret from John Gaunt.

This same morning, two or three hours before, as Gaunt sat at his early breakfast, Rupert Pomeroy had walked in. "Will you give me house-room, Gaunt, for a few days?" he asked, after greetings had passed.

"With pleasure; you know that, Mr. Rupert," was the warm answer of the unsuspicious keeper, with whom Rupert was a favourite. "But what has the abbey done to you?"

"The abbey! do you think I would trouble that?" returned Rupert. "Not after Guy's unbrotherly conduct to me."

"What has he done?"

"He has let me languish in prison for I don't know how long, when three or four hundreds at first would have saved me from it. Yes, Guy might have saved me when I was first arrested, and I'd have taken pretty good care they did not catch me again. Once put in there, and the fact known, all the liabilities I possessed came down upon me together. It was rather a jolly time, though, in there, taking one thing with another."

"And how is it that you have managed to escape now?"

"Whitewashed," briefly rejoined Rupert: and Gaunt drew in his

lips with an expression of pain. "Yes, of course, it is very degrading for a Pomeroy," Rupert added, noting the look; "but no one came to my aid, and I could not languish there for life. Guy will about die of it, I expect. Rare fun if he does."

Gaunt took the valise from Rupert's hand, and conducted him to the little spare chamber that was so rarely occupied.

The Lord of Pomeroy's business that day at Owlstone was to take the chair at a county meeting, involving some question connected with religion. Guy, energetic upon the point, warm and earnest in supporting his own faith, stayed to discuss the matter with some friends after the prolonged meeting was over, and got home late. Alice was at dinner; she had not chosen to wait. Guy ran up to his dressing-room for a minute, and then sat down.

Whilst eating his dinner he told her about the meeting: what was said at it, what done. But that he was so completely absorbed in the topic himself, he might have noted that his wife listened with callous indifference, scarcely deigning to make any reply.

In point of fact, Mrs. Pomeroy was boiling over with wrath, burning to "have it out" with Guy. She fully meant never to forgive her husband what he had done; never: she waited to tell him of the meeting with Rupert, and all she had learnt at it. But the servants were present, and she had to condemn herself to silence.

As the attendants quitted the room, leaving the dessert and wine on the table, Guy drew forth a packet of letters—three or four, tied together—from his pocket. Owlstone had two posts a day; Abbeyland but one; therefore, when any of the abbey people were at Owlstone in the afternoon, they called at the post-office to see if any letters lay there. As Guy had done to-day; and found these.

He proceeded to open them. For Alice this was another delay: he was always so absorbed in his letters, and she wanted his undivided attention. But the waiting was trying her; the tension of her nerves became well-nigh unbearable. Her breath was beginning to grow short; her throat to beat: she laid her hand upon her neck to still it.

"Great heavens!"

The exclamation came from Guy: and it startled her. Startled her because he, the usually calm man, was so powerfully agitated. A dark flash of anger sat on his face, his eyes glared, he groaned in pain. The letter in his hand was in Mr. Hildyard's writing, their London solicitor; Alice could see that much. Surely it had brought some terrible news!

"He must have been mad!" groaned Guy. "The degenerate hound!—to have wrought this shameful disgrace upon our name!"

"Mr. Hildyard has?" questioned Alice, surprised into asking the question, her own grievances giving momentary place to her curiosity.

"Not Hildyard. That wicked brother of mine—Rupert."

The truth was, Mr. Hildyard, deeming himself compelled to acquaint the head of the family with the crisis which had taken place in the fortunes (or misfortunes) of one of its members, had tardily sat down the previous evening to accomplish it. And the letter on which Guy's eyes were strained conveyed the same tidings which Rupert had himself so unceremoniously spoken in a single word to Gaunt—that he had been "whitewashed." Perhaps hardly any other word or deed could have struck so humiliating a sound upon the haughty Lord of Pomeroy.

"He is worse than a serpent!" he raved: and Alice felt daunted as she saw his threatening face. "He is worse than ——"

"Mr. Rupert Pomeroy."

It was Jerome who threw wide the door and announced him. Rupert came forward. Guy gazed at him as though he were an apparition.

"I had thought you would be alone," spoke Rupert lightly, addressing Guy. "You must have dined late."

The easy manner, the insolent words—insolent in Guy's ear—only added fuel to fire. Dark reproach sat on his face, bitter scorn on his tongue. Rupert recriminated on his own score: and Mrs. Pomeroy, who stood her ground, and at first was too terrified to do more than stand it in a remote corner, at length joined in.

What passed, none, apart from themselves, ever knew, but the storm terrified those of the servants who heard it. Jerome, nearly out of his senses, stayed in the ante-room: perhaps to keep others away. They gathered in the corridors and on the stairs. It ended by the Lord of Pomeroy's dashing open the door and ordering the servants to thrust his brother forth. They would have done it; they dared not disobey the lord when he had that temper upon him, or indeed at any other time, but Rupert walked forth of his own accord. Exaggerated tales of the interview went forth to the village.

Mrs. Pomeroy passed swiftly out of the dining-room in the wake of Rupert, and went to her child in the nursery. It was wailing a low wail of complaint or of pain. Mrs. Pomeroy took it, but it would not be soothed; there was still the same low wail; not a cry.

"I cannot think what's the matter with her," exclaimed Bridget. "She has never cried like this: when she does cry, it is like all other children, loud enough for half the abbey to hear, but not this strange pining wail."

No; Mrs. Pomeroy might try her best: the infant would not be tranquillised. Was it wailing for the distress coming on its home?

Tired at length with her efforts to soothe it, for a little thing soon tired Mrs. Pomeroy, she gave it back to Bridget, went to her room, and rang for her maid. Theresa appeared nearly in a state of collapse: she feared that her lady must have had something to do with the cause of the quarrel that had so alarmed them all.

"Which bed-chambers have been prepared for the guests to-morrow?"

"All that were available, I think, madam," was the reply of Theresa. "All on this floor; and some of those above-stairs."

"Is the small room at the side of the north corridor, next to the blue room, ready?"

"Yes, madam, I know it is, for I helped to take the linen to the different rooms, and that was one."

"Carry my things there."

She had gradually (impressed, no doubt, with her own exalted dignity as Lady of Pomeroy) been getting into a habit of speaking imperiously to her servants, even to Theresa, therefore this curtness was no new thing. But the woman doubted in what sense to take the words.

"Remove all my things to that room, I say," repeated Mrs. Pomeroy. "Now. Call some one to help you. It will be mine from henceforth, instead of this."

Theresa was surprised. "And the lord's things also?" she asked.

"Mine, I said," was the sharp retort of Mrs. Pomeroy.

She went outside, passed into one of the transverse corridors, and stood at its end window, apparently gazing into the court-yard. In reality she was gazing within her, at her own outraged heart. Rupert's offence in "whitewashing" himself might be very humiliating, but what was that to her?—all her compassion was spent upon herself—all her bitter rage was given to Guy for the false trick he had played her. Her hands were clasped until the nails pressed her sharply: but what cared she then for bodily pain.

A short while, and she turned to make her way to the dining-room, where she had left her husband. He was not there. She found him in the saloon where they generally sat after dinner; that gorgeously-fitted-up room which Guy had made all gilding and beauty for her: a contrast to their own dark spirits just now. The mirrors reflected their countenances, and Mrs. Pomeroy's was a scowling one; but she had made a compact with herself to be cool and contemptuous, rather than fierce. They had had enough of fierceness for one evening.

Guy sat in one of her dainty chairs, calm, save that his eye was restless. His wife went up and stood in front of him: she placed her hands before her, one over the other, as a school-girl does when repeating a lesson to her governess, and began in a measured tone, steadily looking at him.

"Why did you bring this misery upon us?"

His grey eye flashed. "I have brought no misery. You will bring it upon yourself, if you behave as you behaved to-night."

"You have brought a misery upon us that will never end but with our lives. It never shall end."

"Speak for yourself," he rejoined.

"I do; but I also speak for you, Lord of Pomeroy. You shall go your way, and I will go mine: we are strangers from this hour."

"Perhaps you would like to go your way with Rupert," retorted the lord: speaking, though, in the plenitude of his security that such a catastrophe could no more take place than that the stars could shine at noonday. She and Rupert had both provoked him that evening unjustifiably by their incautious reproaches to him.

"No," she replied, catching up her breath with a gasp, and her face turning to crimson, "you have barred that for ever."

His lips parted, she thought to laugh, and closed again. She was mistaken there; nothing could be much further from Guy Pomeroy's heart and lips that night than laughter. Alice resumed.

"Why did you do so? Why did you come to me with that wicked tale—knowing it was false?"

"I had two motives," he coolly replied. "One was, that I loved you; I was dying for you: the other was, that I would save you from him. Allow that he was not in that one particular case, other cases could have been told you against him. Had you been suffered to marry him, he would have toyed with your heart for a month, and then broken it."

"*I* was dying for Rupert," she returned, in a low tone, whose passion was kept down, while the large tear-drops of regret filled her eyes. "Far rather would I have been his wife for a month, though my heart had then broken, than yours to eternity."

He suppressed his just indignation. No one, save himself, knew what it cost him to do it, or how bitterly she was trying him. "You shall not repeat such language to me, Alice; it is a shame for you to utter it."

"You have heard it before," was the agitated reply. "I told you, in the very hour that you came forth to win me with your falsehood, that I loved your brother with an all-enduring love: I told you I should never love you. You have not forgotten."

No, that he had not Often enough had he winced at the remembrance of the words.

"On the day before our wedding a thought occurred—it must have been some good spirit sent it to me—what if you were deceiving me? and I put the question deliberately to you," she continued. "Do you remember your answer? I prayed you to tell me true; I said that should it ever come to light, later, that you were so deceiving me, it would be bad for both of us. It has now come."

Guy rose from his chair. "Let us have done with this, Alice," he said, in a tone of conciliation.

"Done with it?" she repeated. "Yes, presently, when I have finished: but its effects will never be done with. Guy Pomeroy, I will no longer be your wife: never again; never, never!"

He smiled. "Yes, you will."

"Never again," she murmured. "I would not do so wickedly:

for my whole love is Rupert's. I thought that love was conquered; I did, indeed; but the sight of him has shown me my mistake. The fact is, since I became your wife I have striven to keep it under; been suppressing his image in my mind; I would not suffer it to rise, I would not dwell upon it. Henceforward I shall cherish it and live upon it; so you see how impossible it is that I can stay here to be your wife."

Guy's lips were turning livid. "Have you any sense of shame left?" he asked. And he did not speak without cause: for truly she could possess little, thus to boldly beard her husband.

"You may get a separation; a divorce; anything you please," she continued. "The sooner the better. And then you may bring home another to be the Lady of Pomeroy."

He caught her by the arm.

"You cannot beat me," she said. "The chivalrous Lords of Pomeroy do not beat women."

"You will tempt me to it, Alice, if you drive me to desperation," returned Guy; who, considering his fiery nature, was keeping his temper marvellously well. "Hold your peace, lady."

"When I have said what I wish to say. At present, until these people who are expected shall have come and gone, there must be an appearance of amity between us: after that, I shall consider what to do: probably go home to my mother. But while these gossiping crowds are here, let us play a part: all smiling suavity when before them; strangers when not."

"You pretty little schemer!" he laughed, a shade of contempt in his tone. "The Lords of Pomeroy don't part with their wives thus easily; although you seem so willing to resign your baby."

She looked up with a startled glance. "I should take my baby with me."

"Oh dear no," replied the Lord of Pomeroy. "If you leave my home upon a whim, you do not take my child."

"The law would give it me."

"Alice, it would *not*." And Guy was right.

"Do you know," she whispered, struggling to maintain her calmness, "that you are tempting me to hate you with a double hatred. You have brought woe upon me for ever. I feel as a caged bird, barred in from love and from life; barred by you. I disliked you, Guy, before we married. I hate you now."

"You are bold, my lady."

"But for my own good name, and that the child may grow up to call me mother, I would have quitted your roof this night; ay, though the step had flung me into the arms of Rupert. There was a demon tempting me—had it been only to take my revenge on you."

"If you do not cease, I will have you confined as a madwoman," cried Guy. "Surely you must be mad, to inflict upon yourself this humiliation!"

"I have nearly said my say. To-morrow, before my guests, you will find me all smiles and polite speeches again. My things are being removed to the small room in the north wing, and that will be mine as long as I remain at the abbey."

He leaned towards her, hissing rather than speaking: the haughty Pomeroy temper was being stung cruelly by these insults. "If you attempt to leave your own apartments, I will bar you up in them—and come and attend you as your keeper. You *are* mad, Alice."

"You won me by a lie," she returned, greatly agitated; "and, now that I know it, I am not bound to obey you. If a thief should steal a shilling, though he may get it into his possession, it is not legally or morally his. Did you forget the prediction?—the woe it threatens?"

Guy retorted with scorn. "Prediction? Threatened woe? Tush! —unless you choose to mar the peace of the house and bring it."

"There was to be great woe when that picture was destroyed," she said, catching up her breath.

"Always remember one thing, Alice—that you visited the west wing and the picture in direct disobedience to me. But for that, the picture would not have been destroyed. I must try to teach my wife better manners. But I wish to do it in all kindness. You will order your things back to your own room."

"I will not," she steadily answered. "If you attempt to force me to it, I will go this night to my mother. Pretty scandal for the Lord of Pomeroy, when the guests shall arrive to-morrow and find his lady flown!"

Alice called him right; the Lord of Pomeroy: he was both lord and master. She went to the room that had been hers; Guy followed and closed the door. Bridget, who was near, was startled by the sounds that came from the room: recriminating words from both, though she could not hear their purport; very decisive and haughty ones from the lord, sobs and wails from her mistress. Sudden silence supervened. Bridget felt terrified, she hardly knew of what, went to the door with an excuse, and knocked at it.

It was opened instantly by the lord: he appeared to have been standing near it, and her mistress sat by the table. Bridget could not see her face distinctly, for the room was only lighted by the large lamp, which hung outside in the court-yard.

"Did you call me, madam?" she hastened to say. "I thought you might want the baby, but she's asleep now."

"No one called," replied the lord. "Bridget."

"Sir."

"Some orders of your mistress's have been misapprehended—her things have been carried to the north corridor. Speak to Theresa and have them brought back."

The things were carried back. Mrs. Pomeroy did not gainsay it;

and the servants whispered. Oppose the iron will of Guy Pomeroy? his wife need not have thought it.

When rest and silence fell upon the abbey, there appeared to be rest and silence in the lady's chamber; but had one been curious enough to listen, they might have heard the monotonous step of the lord, pacing it through the better part of the night.

It is an act of madness to pour spirits on a raging fire; little less so to control by angry force the fierce will of an indignant woman. That Mrs. Pomeroy had not a well-regulated mind has been previously observed, lest the reader did not see it for himself: though perhaps none, even of those who had been about her from childhood, suspected *how* ill-regulated it might become in a season of temptation. The steps taken by Guy—in this the first moment of her renewed fancy for Rupert and rage against himself—were not judicious ones. Far better that he had let her go to the lonely room, and suffered her indignation to spend itself there for a short while, a few days, and then have tried conciliation. It might have answered—after a little holding out; for a woman, look you, talk as she may, will think twice before she actually goes the length of quitting her husband's home, or of in any way separating herself from him. As it was, Madam Alice Pomeroy was nursing all kinds of reprisals in her revengeful heart.

CHAPTER XI.

FOLLY.

In the state dining-room below, never used but on occasions of extremely ceremonious or large dinners, sat the Lord and the Lady of Pomeroy, entertaining their guests. A fine sight: a goodly company. The dishes of silver-gilt, bearing their costly viands, crowded the board. The dinner à-la-Russe fashion had not come in then; and the more prodigal the feast displayed on the table, the greater honour was accounted to be rendered to the guests.

The wax-lighted chandeliers hung from the ceiling; the sideboard shone with its array of glass and plate. Numerous servants in their liveries of purple velvet and silver, waited about, headed by Jerome in plain attire, who stood behind his lord, and never served anybody but him. At the left hand of Mrs. Pomeroy sat Father Andrew; towards the middle of the table sat Mrs. Wylde. The priest was all merry good nature; it did one good to look at his rubicund face, he could hardly control it to solemnity while he said grace; Mrs. Wylde was gorgeous as dress could make her, but otherwise not much to be noticed: and as these two are all we know among the guests, the others need not be mentioned.

It was a grand old room; and was supposed to have been the chapel in by-gone days, before the other chapel was built. The mahogany panelings were in small divisions, and richly carved, each one

having been formerly a monk's stall. Three high windows of painted glass, representing scenes in the times of the crusaders, looked towards the quadrangle. They gave the only light the room had, consequently it was dark by day: but emblazoned, as now, with its many wax lights, that fault could not at present be charged upon it. On these state occasions the painted windows were lighted up by means of lamps placed behind them outside; and they formed not the least of the room's attractions, particularly for those who had the luck to sit on the side facing them, and so could look at them at will during the whole time of the banquet.

Who so gay as Mrs. Pomeroy, heading her table in her white robes of silk and lace, her favourite attire; who so calm, so equable, so courteous as her lord, facing her at the end of the long table? Of all the toilettes present, not one was more beautiful than hers; of all the faces, not one was so lovely. Upon her white neck, her arms, nestling amid her hair, glittered the diamonds handed to her by Guy on their wedding day; upon her cheeks shone the damask flush of excitement. This set of diamonds, and they were of rare beauty, belonged to the reigning Lady of Pomeroy, and to her alone; did she cease to reign, they went from her. If Guy died to-morrow, and Rupert succeeded, Mrs. Pomeroy could no longer wear or claim the diamonds. Had her child been a boy, she would have reigned Lady of Pomeroy until that boy should in his turn bring a wife home to replace her, and could have worn the Pomeroy diamonds until then.

Dear, most dear, was this show and state to Mrs. Pomeroy. Her heart was conscious of that. It was also conscious, for a little latent voice kept rising within it to that effect, that if she quitted the abbey, this show and state would, for her, be for ever over: it was only as the Lord of Pomeroy's wife that she could enjoy it. The homage rendered to her was but rendered in right of Guy: separate herself from him, and she might sink back to the obscurity from which she came; obscurity compared with the position she revelled in now. Mrs. Wylde was rich, but her riches would not gather about her an assemblage such as this: the guests of rank, second only to princes; or the plate emblazoned with the Lord of Pomeroy's arms, come down from generation to generation; or the time-worn, sumptuously-clad retainers, who looked as if they could never belong to any but an ancient family. Yes; Alice Pomeroy had been raised to this height, and she would certainly think twice before she wilfully forfeited it.

Ever and anon as she sat there, came a thought into her mind, "I should not like to leave it; I must do nothing rashly." Until this evening, which was the day of the guests' arrival, and the evening following the scene with Guy, she had been keeping up the ball of indignation with her own heart; had been feeding her enmity to her husband, had been saying to herself, "I will not stay with him." But now, with all this glitter and glamour before her, she did not feel so sure about it. Not a single word had they spoken to one another

since the unseemly recrimination; she in her resentment would not speak; Guy deemed it best to humour her mood and allow her a little time to come to her senses. Amidst the guests were some who had never seen her; and Guy had performed the introduction with the most perfect suavity, "My wife, the Lady of Pomeroy." For all anybody had seen, they were upon the pleasant terms that man and wife should be; she was lively, laughing, gay; he, courteous and attentive to all to the last degree. Ever and anon, as they sat opposite to each other now, she caught Guy's eyes fixed upon her—and turned away her own at once in resentment. He was the finest looking man in the room, towering above them all; some little warmth sat in his usually pallid face; and though the unfortunate upper lip was undeniably ugly, the well-carved Pomeroy features, and the dark-grey eyes were beautiful.

The lord had begun by entertaining his guests right regally, as a Pomeroy loved to do; he would so continue to entertain them until the fortnight for which they were invited came to an end. Excursions abroad, evening festivities at home, occasionally varied with men's out-of-door sports. The grandest fête of all would be that of the christening: for which Miss Pomeroy, who was to be one of the godmothers, would arrive. And so, we leave them at the dinner-table.

The next morning the gentlemen went out shooting, Guy giving orders for luncheon to be sent to them. Some of the ladies proposed a drive to Owlstone, and carriages were ordered round. Towards mid-day, Alice, making her baby an excuse for absenting herself from the rest of her guests, left her mother to entertain them, put on her bonnet, and walked out. It was a most lovely day. October had brought in a true été de St. Michel, and this was the third of the month.

Yes, she walked out deliberately, knowing that she ran the hazard of meeting Rupert Pomeroy: though indeed he might already have left Abbeyland. In later years, when she was bearing the burden of a life-long repentance, she would tell herself again and again that she did not seek to meet him; that she would not have gone out purposely to do it. Most certainly she had no wrong thought in her heart; let us give her that due; she did not forget that she was his brother's wife.

Winding round to the south of the abbey, her beautiful morning dress of a delicate lilac colour trailing on the hot grass, she came upon Rupert. He was standing by the Keep, just in the same spot where they had met two days before. Rupert raised his hat and held out his hand; the colour rushed vividly into her face as she put out her own hand to answer it.

"Taking a walk, Mrs. Pomeroy? You are lucky to get time for it, with that house full of people."

"Most of them are out," she answered, "and mamma is there. Oh, Rupert! I—I must tell you! We had such a dreadful scene."

"Who had? When?"

"I and Guy. After you left."

And then, most imprudently and inexcusably, Mrs. Pomeroy began to give Rupert the history of what had passed between herself and Guy. She was yearning for sympathy, and she had no one else to tell it to; and the sight and presence of Rupert, whom she still so passionately loved—though it is a humiliation even to record it—called up again all her resentment, her ill-feeling towards Guy. One word, one avowal led to another, Alice did not spare her husband; all the bitter things her tongue could say were heaped upon him. The fact of Rupert being his brother justified this in her own mind; to any other man she, with all her incaution, would not have been so imprudent. And Rupert, far from repressing, met her half way, for had he not grievances on his own score to settle with Guy, and abused him to her heart's content. Thus, in close conversation, now one speaking, and now the other, and pacing slowly round and round the Keep, they, chancing to lift their heads, saw a company of sportsmen at a great distance.

"Oh, Rupert, Guy is with them!" she suddenly exclaimed, "and they are coming this way! It will make him more angry than ever to see me talking with you."

Without a word, Rupert touched one of her hands and drew her to a small low door in the wall at the back of the Keep; it flew open, and admitted them inside.

"You are safe here until they have passed," he whispered.

"But how did you get the door open?" she asked in wonder. "I always understood that little door could not be opened from the outside."

"Neither can it be, except by me and the lord. Yes, Jerome knows the secret; I forgot him. There is an invisible spring."

"The lord!" she uttered, in breathless agitation. "Suppose he should take it in his head to enter now?"

Rupert smiled, drew a strong iron bar across the door and secured it. "Not a dozen lords combined could enter now."

"Suppose he were to come in by the front door?"

"My dear Alice, what should bring him with the key of the Keep? I don't suppose it has been taken from Jerome's key-closet for years."

But Mrs. Pomeroy held her breath and trembled; conscience and fear were making a coward of her. And rightly—she had no business to conceal herself. That was the first false step.

She took another within the next five minutes. She and Rupert stood, straining their ears to listen for the voices and footsteps of the sportsmen, but the walls were thick, for the door had admitted them to a room inside the Keep, not to any court or yard without it. "They must have passed by this time," said Rupert, at length; "I will go up and see. Would you like to look over the old Keep, Alice?"

"Oh dear no," she hastily replied. "I am only anxious to get out of it; I tremble lest any untoward miracle should bring Guy in."

Rupert laughed. Ascending the narrow stairs he made his way to the front of the building, and peeped out at one of the quaint loop-holes of windows. Yes; the sportsmen had come that way. "They are right down in the dell now, half way to the abbey," he said, returning. "All is safe."

"Oh, thank goodness! Open the door for me."

"As soon as they shall be out of sight. You may finish what you were telling me here, as well as outside. There is no such hurry."

"I dare not, Rupert," she said. "See how I am shaking. I shall make haste to the abbey, before he can find that I am out. They must be coming back to lunch, although he ordered it taken to them."

"I don't see that you need be so afraid of him."

"But I am. It is his turn, just while these people and mamma are with us; she takes his part in everything—and he nearly frightened me to death that night. But my time will come."

"Has Mrs. Wylde been told, then?"

"No. But I know how she would take it, if she were. I am sure they must be out of sight now."

Rupert undid the door and they passed outside together; he closing it again after him.

"We cannot part for good like this, Alice, with your tale half told," he said. For what with her elaboration in the recital, and the interruption on both sides to abuse Guy, the history was not at an end. "Meet me here to-morrow and finish it; I may be far away the next day."

"Oh, Rupert, I am afraid."

"If you mean afraid of me, you are more foolish than I could have thought you," he rejoined. "You were not afraid to meet me once, and I did not attempt to harm you: I should certainly not be likely to attempt to now. If you mean afraid of Guy, he cannot see you, inside here. I will have the door open at this hour, and be waiting for you."

"I have no one in the world to tell my anger and grief to but you, Rupert, and if I cannot tell them to somebody they will break my heart," cried the weak woman.

"Of course they will," laughed Rupert, gaily; attaching as much importance to the silly words as they deserved.

"If I thought it would not be wrong to come!"

"Where would the wrong lie?"

"After all, Guy is your brother."

"He is, and you are his wife. I am not likely to forget it."

"Of course, you would not forget it: neither do I. Then I will come, Rupert."

False step the second—and a very false one.

"Why, where have you been?" cried Mrs. Wylde, chancing to

meet Alice in the corridor as she stole in. At least her soft steps, and the gown held up to prevent the sound of its rustle, looked like stealing in.

"My head ached, mamma; I went out for a little stroll," briefly responded Alice, making the best of her way onwards.

"Oh, and Alice, the gentlemen have come back to luncheon," Mrs. Wylde called out after her. "The birds were shy, and they got tired."

"Nice sportsmen!" muttered Alice, with a toss of the head.

Mrs. Pomeroy did not forget on the following day the appointment she had made with Rupert; be you very sure of that. Deep in her heart there sat a latent consciousness that she might be acting unwisely; but she was cherishing the revengeful feeling towards her husband with the most inveterate obstinacy. Had all the saints in the chapel warned her not to meet Rupert, she would not have listened to them.

Leaving her visitors to occupy themselves as they best might, or to be entertained by her mother, Mrs. Pomeroy went forth to the meeting, just as the little chapel clock was ringing out its twelve strokes for mid-day. Guy was away again, the sportsmen having gone to-day to a greater distance. She found Rupert waiting for her at the little door of the Keep, which stood open.

"Good morning," said he. "I began to think you were not coming."

"It is only twelve o'clock."

"*Only* twelve! I have been here these twenty minutes. And you know the old Spanish proverb."

"No I don't. What is it?"

"'To expect one who does not come; to lie in bed and not to sleep; to serve and not to be advanced, are three things enough to kill a man.' I don't say they would kill me, but I never was famous for patience. Will you come in?"

"No; I am not going inside to-day. We can walk about while I finish the history of what Guy said and did; and then I must go back again."

"As you will," replied Rupert. And he was turning to shut the Keep door, when, somewhat to his surprise, Alice whisked swiftly past him and went inside of her own accord.

"There's Father Andrew," she whispered.

Rupert looked round. The priest had come out of the chapel, and was halting at its entrance, as if uncertain whether to bend his steps this way or round to his own house beyond the grave-yard. Rupert followed Mrs. Pomeroy, and shut the door.

"I'm sure you need not be afraid of the priest," said he. "What though he did see me walking with you? Is it treason?"

"He might tell Guy," said Mrs. Pomeroy.

"And what if he did! There's no harm. Guy would not eat you for it."

"He might—shake me. I declare, Rupert, I thought that night, more than once, that he would have shaken me."

"How you must have provoked him!" laughed Rupert.

"I did. I said everything I could to do it. He was so mad!"

Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute, you know. Once inside the Keep, Mrs. Pomeroy seemed reconciled to the situation, and made no move to go out again. In truth, she was afraid of being seen. Other eyes might be about, as well as Father Andrew's. She knew well enough that she ought not to be with Rupert while he and Guy were at variance; it was like "going over to the enemy;" least of all, meet him clandestinely. He was her husband's brother, and, as such, on the face of things it seemed that there could be no harm in it; but, remembering the terms on which Guy and Rupert were, and her own former love for Rupert, even the elastic conscience of Alice Pomeroy warned her that it was what she ought not to do. As to Rupert, his conscience was elastic at all times, but he had the high, honourable instincts of a Pomeroy in all that related to the Pomeroys, and most assuredly he would not have wronged a brother. Neither would he have willingly brought Guy's wife under his censure, bitterly though he was feeling towards himself. It was very pleasant indeed to meet Alice, and join her in abusing Guy.

Rupert perched himself upon a high stone ledge projecting from the wall; Mrs. Pomeroy sat on the opposite side of the room on a low stool creaky with age: and there they talked away at Guy to their anger's content; but it was all highly wrong and foolish, and she, at any rate, ought to have known better.

"I told him I would quit the abbey as soon as these people went, Rupert," she observed, after bringing her narrative of the quarrel between herself and Guy to a conclusion. "And I think I shall."

"Quit the abbey?" questioned Rupert, not knowing in what sense to take the words. "How do you mean?"

"Quit it for good. Quit *him*."

"That *would* be wise!" returned Rupert, in a tone that proved he thought the contrary.

"But there's the baby, you see," debated Alice, as she leaned forward, her elbow on her knee, her chin on her hand. "I am afraid he'd keep it. He said he would. He said the law would give it him."

"I daresay it would. Do you want my opinion?"

"If you will give it," she answered with a half sob.

"That you could not take a more unwise step. It is one you would probably repent of all your life. Having adopted the abbey for your home, there's nothing for it, that I see, but to stay in it."

"I like it for some things," confessed Alice, thinking of the show and the splendour. "But I don't like Guy."

"You should have thought of that before. It's too late now."

"Will you, please, look at your watch?" cried Alice, thinking he was not very complimentary this morning.

It was half-past twelve. Rupert jumped off his perch, and Alice rose. In walking towards the door, a thought struck her.

"You have not told me where you are staying, Rupert?"

"At Gaunt's."

"At Gaunt's! Oh, then you are friendly with him!"

"Why should we not be friendly?"

"Well—I thought—about Captain Pomeroy, you know."

Just for the moment Rupert, who had his hand on the spring of the door and his face turned back towards her, did not seem to catch her meaning. "About Sybilla," she added.

"It would be hard if the sins of one brother were to be visited on the other," answered Rupert, a smile crossing his lips. "Even if Gaunt were aware that George had injured him—which he is not."

"I have fancied that. Where is Sybilla now?"

"I do not know anything about the matter," interrupted Rupert, in a tone that admitted of no appeal. "My own peccadilloes are enough for me to carry, without troubling myself about those of my brothers. We Pomeroys do not interfere with one another. The best thing you can do, Alice, is to forget Sybilla Gaunt. Above all, remember—remember always—that I have confided George's name to you in strict confidence, as regards this affair. Never let it escape your lips."

"You may trust me. Will you look out and see that the coast is clear?"

The coast was clear. It was a spot rarely frequented, and not a soul was in sight. For a few minutes they paced about underneath the Keep: and when they parted, another appointment was made for the morrow. Rupert avowed that he was not going away from Abbeyland just yet: he had formed no plans, and might as well stay a few days, as not.

And so, as the days went on, Mrs. Pomeroy suffered herself to fall into the habit of meeting Rupert: and the habit, considering his reckless character and the temper she was at present indulging, was not altogether a safe one. All the old love was revived in the heart of each; and that was not altogether safe. Neither of them had any ill intention, not a thought of wrong: had danger been mentioned to them, each would alike have scorned the suggestion.

Not every day, but as often as she could safely accomplish it, did Mrs. Pomeroy go forth to meet Rupert in the Keep. There was no more reason for their seeking the shelter of the Keep than for being in the open air, only that within it they were safe from remark. No doubt it wore a bad appearance, these secret meetings in that private place; that is, it would have worn such had there been eyes to observe. But they would have seen nothing worse than Rupert perched on his stone ledge, and Alice on the low stool by the opposite wall, both talking away eagerly, the theme generally being the treachery of the lord. That was all; but, as above remarked, it was altogether highly hazardous and objectionable.

The guests had been at Pomeroy Abbey ten days, three-parts the length of term they were invited for, when the day of the christening dawned. It brought a disappointment. Much wonder, some concern, had been excited the previous evening in consequence of the non-arrival of Miss Pomeroy. This morning Guy received a letter, saying they were not to expect her. The indisposition of her sister's children — which had delayed her coming — had culminated in scarlatina. It was of a very mild kind, she wrote, and would no doubt soon be well over; but she felt that she ought not to come to the abbey and risk bringing the infection with her to Guy's little one. Guy was very sorry; he thought much of having his sister Joan present at the service; but her decision was of course a right one.

And with much pomp and ceremony, the little girl, adorned with her beautiful robes, was carried to the chapel, and there received the solemn rite of baptism. The names bestowed upon her were Mary Alice Joan. Mary after the lord's mother, Alice after his wife, Joan after his sister. In the evening there was a great banquet: at which none shone so brightly or looked so gay as Mrs. Pomeroy.

The love of Rupert was filling her whole heart; and the daily meetings with him, innocent though in one sense they were, had become ominously dear. I shall see him to-day, was the one thought that would flash over her mind when she woke in the morning: and in her gladness she was even civil to her husband.

And Guy? Guy was just trusting to time and to himself to make it all right with his wife; and he had no more notion that she was keeping up the ball of abuse of him, or treacherously meeting Rupert, than had the man in the moon.

But, one evening, two days after the christening, when Alice had gone to the nursery before dinner, Mrs. Wylde came in. Alice looked rather surprised as her mother carefully shut the door and came forward.

"Is anybody in the inner room, Alice?"

"No. Bridget went down stairs for something or other. Why?"

"What brought you to-day marching round the Keep with Rupert Pomeroy?" proceeded Mrs. Wylde, without circumlocution.

At that moment Alice's baby was lying on her lap, its little face turned upwards, its eyes closed in sleep. She bent over the child, seemingly to do something to the frill of its nightgown: in reality to gain time. For the sudden question had startled her.

"Who says I was there?" she asked, her face flushing.

"Now, Alice, don't equivocate: it will not serve you. You *were* there, and with him: and you were with him in the same place one day last week also."

"And if I were?" retorted Alice, resolving to meet the matter boldly, and raising her head. "Is it high treason?"

"It is high folly," returned Mrs. Wylde. "Very unjustifiable,

considering the ill terms that exist between Rupert and the lord, and that he is forbidden the house."

"Rupert is not on ill terms with me. If we—if we chance to meet, I may surely speak to him, and——and walk a few steps by his side?"

"Don't you do anything so disloyal again, Alice. Rupert Pomeroy has lowered the family with his debts and his ill courses; the lord feels it keenly; and you, his wife, should at least have the grace not to countenance him."

"And, pray, mamma, who is it that has brought tales to you of me and my movements?"

"Lettice chanced to see you, and mentioned it to me."

"'Chanced' to mention to you that she saw me last week, and 'chanced' to mention it to you to-day. I should call Lettice a firebrand."

"Nonsense, Alice! Lettice is nothing of the sort: she had no ill intention in speaking. But, my dear, I beg of you to be cautious. Do not be seen with Rupert Pomeroy again: it would not be pleasant to your husband."

"Oh, of course *he* must be studied!"

"Well," concluded Mrs. Wylde, not altogether liking the rebellion in her daughter's words and manner, "do not forget, Alice, that *I have warned you.*"

Oh, that she had taken the hint! Wilful, mistaken, senseless woman! But for her folly the terrible tragedy that supervened would never have occurred.

It was just as though her mother had spoken to the winds. Nay, the very speaking rendered her present resentful mood only the more resentful. She continued to meet Rupert; partly because she liked to be with him, partly because she knew how angry it would make Guy, and therefore was a kind of revenge upon him. Moreover, as she told herself, she was doing no real harm to anybody: and the pleasure of it would soon be over, for Rupert was going back to London. And thus the days went on to the end.

For the end came: in more senses than one.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE HAUNTED ROOM.

It was the day previous to that which was to witness the departure of the abbey guests, and close upon mid-day. Mrs. Pomeroy had left them to their own devices, and was going forth to another stolen interview, when on turning out of the abbey gates she encountered Bridget and the baby.

"What are you here for?" she began, in her imperious way.

"I ordered you to take the child through the village, up towards the forest."

"I am going, madam. But," added Bridget, dropping her voice, "I have just met Mr. Rupert, and he sent me back with this. He bade me lose no time in giving it into your own hands."

It could scarcely be called a note that the girl held out. It appeared to be a leaf taken from a pocket-book, folded, and tied round with string: as if the writer had not been able to find any better fastening. Mrs. Pomeroy took it gingerly in her fingers, with a suitable show of surprise and reluctance.

"Mr. Rupert sent you with this! To me! Why, what is it, I wonder? What can he want? You need not wait, Bridget."

Bridget turned away with her charge. Her mistress untied the string, and saw a few words in pencil.

"*Don't come to-day.* The Keep is no longer safe: and I suspect that I am being watched. I will be in the west tower to-night; in the haunted room. Come up there for a minute; I will not keep you longer—just that I may explain. You will find the doors open."

Mrs. Pomeroy tore the paper into minute bits, and scattered them to the winds. Turning back to the abbey, she shut herself in her chamber and sat down to think.

To say that the words puzzled her would be saying little to express the utter astonishment that filled her mind. They also alarmed her. "I will be in the west tower to-night;" she soliloquised: "he must surely be out of his senses to say it. He could only get there by passing through the abbey: and that he would not dare attempt just now. What can it mean? There must be some mistake. And the Keep no longer safe!" ran on her thoughts, herself slightly shivering. "Has Guy ——"

Mrs. Pomeroy stopped. Fright drowned the rest of the words. If Guy had indeed found out that she held these interviews in the old Keep, he would be fit to kill her.

A fine state of tremor she was in all day; of suspense; of anxious curiosity to know the best and the worst. But she had no means of satisfying herself; for she dared not walk out on the chance of meeting Rupert. Had he not said he was watched?—perhaps she was watched also? And what Rupert could have meant about the west tower was beyond the bounds of imagination to divine. Mrs. Pomeroy did not attempt to go to it.

The following morning witnessed the departure of the guests. At least, of most of them. It was the 17th of October: a day to be darkly noted henceforth in the annals of the Pomeroys as the most terrible that had ever dawned for them. Three or four of Guy's particular friends, men, would remain a day or two longer: on the morrow a great onslaught was to be made on the pheasants, and they stayed for it.

At one o'clock Bridget came in from her walk with the baby, and Mrs. Pomeroy, an intensely fond mother, ran upstairs. She was taking the baby from Bridget when the woman gave her another note. Mrs. Pomeroy opened it.

"Why did you not come? I waited for you in the west tower for three hours. I saw you open your chamber window and look out; but the casement where I stood lay in deep shade, and I deemed it might be unwise to open it, or to make any signal. I shall be there again this evening: come for an instant, as I leave for good to-morrow. You will find the doors open. I have chosen the west tower as being perhaps the only place where I should never be looked for."

So ran the note: and Mrs. Pomeroy, reading it a second and a third time, thought surely magic must be at work. That Rupert was not deceiving her in saying he had waited for her in the west tower, she felt sure of—and, indeed, to what end would he do so? Yet—how could he have ascended to it? It was hardly possible that Rupert could have passed through the abbey and got Jerome's keys without being seen by the servants. Could it be that he had bribed the servants—had talked over old Jerome? She hardly thought it; for they were all true, heart and soul, to their reigning lord, and the dissension between him and Rupert was no secret. At the best, it was dangerous. Dangerous for Rupert to attempt anything of the kind; dangerous for him to go up to the west tower. But it would be far more dangerous for her to go—and that she was resolving to do. Full of sinful dissimulation—for dissimulation in such a cause is nothing less than sin—she began scheming how she could best contrive to get up to the west wing unperceived.

She was not feeling well, she told her mother in the afternoon. She told her husband so, making a merit of the necessity of speaking to him, and speaking civilly. She should get them to excuse her at the dinner-table: sick of the continual feasting, weary after the exertion of playing hostess to so many guests, she should enjoy a cup of tea in her own room in preference to dinner; perhaps should go to bed; and her mother could head the table for once for Guy and the two or three men who remained. No opposition was made to this either by her mother or the lord: and all things seemed to go on smoothly for her scheme.

Evening came. Dinner was again laid in the state banqueting-hall below, though so few would this time partake of it; and when they were seated safely at table, Mrs. Wylde facing Guy, Alice's time was come.

Trembling and shaking, not so much at the evil deceit of what she was doing, as at the thought of penetrating by dark—or rather by moonlight, for the moon shone full and bright—to the west tower and that haunted room in it, Mrs. Pomeroy prepared to set forth.

She had felt a horror of the room ever since the day of the accident to the picture, and a vexed feeling had rested on her mind for having gone to it in the teeth of the expressed wishes of Guy; but, to meet Rupert and say farewell to him, she was ready to dare it now.

Quitting her apartments, watching her opportunities so that she might escape the eyes of servants, sheltering herself now in this corner, now in that, Mrs. Pomeroy got safely below into the cloisters, and thence into the north wing. The north tower door stood open for her, she ascended its stairs, and was speedily at the west wing. Whether she would have had courage to go through the rooms alone remains unsolved, for there, at the top of the stairs, stood Rupert.

"Where's Guy?" he whispered, as he took her hand in greeting; and the anxious question proved that he was not easy as to Guy.

"At dinner in the banquet-hall. I told him I was ill and could not go down. He thinks, no doubt, that I am sulky."

Rupert descended to lock the door, and make all secure; but as they went on into the next rooms, she shook so that he was obliged to hold her. *She* was not easy, either.

"Rupert, this is what I ought not to do, and I would not have come had I known how else to see you. But I am so terribly anxious about the Keep; I have had no peace since that first note of yours, and I wanted to ask you what had happened. Oh, dear! must we go into that haunted chamber?"

"It will be pleasanter for you because you can sit down," he answered, pushing open the door of it.

The moonlight shone into the chamber, revealing its ghastliness—and ghastly enough it looked by this light to the imagination of Mrs. Pomeroy. It shone on the mysterious picture, and on the defasure caused by the burn, when she had accidentally held the candle too close. Whether the canvas was damp, or whether it was in a degree fireproof, or whether the spirit of the nun was present to protect her own image and property, was uncertain; but all the burn had done was to smoulder away into smoke, destroying a portion of the picture, leaving an ugly black stream stretching upwards and across; but, strange to say, sparing alike the face and the prediction. As Mrs. Pomeroy now saw how little damage had been done, compared with the wholesale destruction she had fancied, she thought old Jerome must have been very awkward and clumsy to scorch his hands so much. All things were as they had been left that night. The lord had given no orders upon the matter, and the servants had been only too content not to meddle of their own accord. Perhaps in the subsequent bustle, attendant upon the birth of the little girl, Guy had forgotten all about it.

The prediction was in Mrs. Pomeroy's mind as she stood there

in the moonlight, every line, every word; the lines were ringing in her ears with an ominous sound.

> "When Pomeroy's heir goes forth a wife to win,
> And Pomeroy's heir goes forth in vain:
> When Pomeroy's lord by a lie doth gain,
> Then woe to the Pomeroys twain and twain."

Ominous indeed: more ominous than they had ever sounded before. She heaved a deep sigh, and turned away from the picture. Rupert crossed the room, and took up his standing by the window.

"Why do you sigh?" he asked.

"Why do I sigh? I have enough to make me sigh, with one thing and another. And I am in mortal dread of Guy's finding out that I have met you. Have you been dining out?" she added, suddenly noticing that he wore black clothes.

"Ay, at Knox's. I had to come away at the second course."

"But how did you manage to get up here?" she exclaimed, sitting down on the old velvet-covered couch, to be more at her ease while she put her questions. "I feel bewildered, I cannot make it out. How many of the servants saw you pass the corridors?"

"Not one, either last night or to-night. I took care."

"But, Rupert, a lot of them are always round about Jerome's key-closet."

"They did not see me; and, if they had seen, they could not have known me. Look here."

He suddenly enveloped himself in a friar's grey cloak, throwing the capuchin—or hood, as the English call it—over his head, so as to conceal his face effectually—just as a fair dame does, when she goes out of heated rooms at night.

"And your hat?"

"I wore none. I got Father Andrew to lend this cloak to me yesterday," he continued, turning himself round in the moonlight for Mrs. Pomeroy's inspection. "He wanted to know what midnight expedition I was bent upon. Sly dogs, our priests," laughed Rupert; "they know the use of the capuchin themselves ——"

"Oh, Rupert!" she interrupted, her tones savouring of rebuke, "Father Andrew is as good as he can be."

"I believe he is. I was only joking. He likes a joke himself," added Rupert, speaking out of the hood. "Had any of the servants seen me in this attire, far from recognising me, they would have flown away scared, thinking the nun there," pointing to the picture, "was abroad to-night."

He threw off the cloak as he spoke. Mrs. Pomeroy rose, went to the window, and peeped out.

"Caution, Alice. The moon is bright, and your face might be discerned here from the house. Had she not been under the dark clouds last night, you might have seen mine."

"I thought it utterly impossible that you could get here: I thought

you must have made some great error. How did you get the keys?"

Rupert Pomeroy stole his lips towards her ear. "Filched them! Stepped aside to Jerome's closet-sanctum, and filched them."

"Filched them!" echoed Mrs. Pomeroy; "Jerome keeps it locked—even if you contrived to escape meeting the servants."

"It is not always locked; and luck favoured me; it often has. I have had possession of them from last night to this."

She thought his manner strange: lighter than customary when with her. He appeared to speak in a laughing, insincere sort of way, as though he were making game of her, or else of his own assertions. Years and years afterwards she remembered it.

"How very imprudent! If Jerome had missed the keys to-day the whole abbey might have been roused."

"No fear," laughed Rupert again. "Jerome would not miss them."

"Rupert!" she suddenly exclaimed, a light breaking in upon her, "Jerome has aided you to come here!"

"No he has not. Not a soul has aided me, save Father Andrew, in the loan of the capuchin; little guessed he that it was to steal a visit to the Lady of Pomeroy. Jerome has aided me in another way, though—you do not ask about the Keep."

"I have been putting it off," she replied, sitting down again on the couch. "The thought of it frightens me."

"We have had a spy upon us, Alice, as sure as that we are here. Whether the lord has found out anything for himself, or whether he has been put on the scent by others, I can't say: I think the latter, for if he had watched you to the Keep, he would most certainly have pounced in upon you."

"But how did you learn anything at all?" she interrupted, not allowing him to go on steadily. Rupert smiled at her impatience. He was leaning against the wall beside the casement, his arms folded.

"I learned it through Jerome. Yesterday he made his appearance at Gaunt's, and began talking to me about the Keep in a low whisper, though Gaunt and his housekeeper, old Nanny, were both abroad and I had the place to myself——"

"What did he say? What did he say?"

"If you interrupt me like this we shall never get to the end of the story," laughed Rupert. And as the reader may be saying the same, it may be as well to give it as it occurred.

Jerome made his appearance at the gamekeeper's lodge the previous morning, as you have now heard, voice, tread, manner alike stealthy, just as a schoolboy's is when he is at some mischief. "Mr. Rupert," he began, "do you go at all to the Keep?"

"Why?" asked Rupert.

"But do you, sir?"

"I have been in there once or twice."

"Ah, I was sure of it!" cried old Jerome. "I wish you'd be away from the village, sir, until matters are smoother between you and the lord: ever since that quarrel at the abbey the other night, a feeling has been upon me that worse might come. This morning before breakfast the lord came to me: 'To whom have you entrusted the key of the Keep?' he asked: and I saw by his stern eye that something was wrong. 'It has not been out of my custody since the late lord died,' I answered. 'You lie, Jerome,' he cried: 'You have lent it to my brother, Rupert Pomeroy. Or else you have kept it so loosely, that somebody has been able to get possession of it for him.' Well, Mr. Rupert, with that we went on to the key-closet, which I unlocked; and in my flurry I looked in the wrong niche for the key, and did not see it. The lord stood by with folded arms. 'I thought you were faithful,' he said, and it made my old eyes water, for faithful I am and have ever been to the Lords of Pomeroy—and I am not the less so to you, Mr. Rupert, so far as I can be. The lord saw my distress. 'Some one was in the Keep yesterday, Jerome,' he said in a kinder tone: 'I tried the spring of the private door, and could not get in, therefore somebody must have been there and had got the bar up.' 'Here's the key, Lord of Pomeroy,' I said, showing it to him: 'in my haste I looked in the wrong place. I have not given it to Mr. Rupert.' 'Then,' said the lord, when he saw the key, 'the secret of the spring must be known to some person—and the most likely person is my brother Rupert: who else would dare to meddle with the Keep?' And so, Mr. Rupert," added the old man, "I thought it my duty to come and tell you this, for I conclude, sir, it was you who went into it."

Such was the story Rupert repeated to Mrs. Pomeroy. Ere it was concluded, she rose in terror and grasped Rupert's arm; terror at the thought of what might have come of it, had the door of the Keep not been barred. It's true that the worst the lord could have seen (and this has been said before) was Rupert lodged on his high shelf, and Mrs. Pomeroy swaying herself on the low stool opposite, abusing himself confidentially: but that would be quite enough, as we all must allow, to raise the ire of most husbands, more especially one so fiery as the haughty Lord of Pomeroy.

"Jerome added that Guy took possession of the key," continued Rupert to Mrs. Pomeroy, "and reiterated his warning to me not to enter it again. The foolish old fellow actually had tears in his eyes. I fancy he knows you were there with me."

"Oh!" she screamed.

"I gathered it from a remark he made—that one of the maids had seen you walking with me by the Keep. Confound all women's tongues! And now, Alice, you know why I sent you that first note by Bridget ——"

"If she had shown it to anyone?" gasped Mrs. Pomeroy.

"Who? Bridget? No fear. She is one of those who are true to

the Pomeroys, heart and soul. And I really was unable to think of any safe place but this, where we could meet for an explanation and say farewell. Guy is as sly as a fox: and as keen as one, once his doubts are aroused. Of all places, he'd never think of the haunted room."

"Do you really go to-morrow?"

"I go to-morrow. I should have gone to-day had you come last night. It may be better that I should be away, as old Jerome says. Badly though Guy has treated me, I don't wish to sow dissension in his home: and my staying here might result in that."

She was weeping silently. Rupert Pomeroy was very dear to her, and she was about to lose sight of him, perhaps for ever: but she, as silently, wiped away the tears, so that he should see them not.

There is an expressive Italian proverb—I forget precisely how it runs, but the sense is, that for the debtor's bond and the stolen interview, time flies on wings. On wings, most certainly, it appeared to fly for those in the haunted room. Mrs. Pomeroy may have been unconscious of its flitting; let her answer it; but when the court-yard clock rang out ten, she was still there.

With a faint cry of dismay she started up and approached the window. Was it indeed ten?—or only nine? She strained her eyes on the clock, for it was above the entrance archway, and faced her; but, strain them as she would, she could not make out its hands: the dial was too far off. Rupert followed her, though little cared he what the hour might be.

"Have you a watch, Rupert?"

"No, I left mine at Gaunt's: the spring's broken."

"I do fear it was ten that struck. And, what if Guy should have been up, and missed me? I must go at once; without delay."

As she turned from the window, accustomed now to the faint light of the room, she distinguished a tall dark figure standing up, right against the picture. Fascinated and terror stricken, she gazed; not with ghostly terror, but with terror far more ominous and real—far too well did she discern the grand outlines of that form, and knew it to be no other than her husband's. Rupert, who had a good sight, was peering at the opposite clock, when he found himself suddenly and unexpectedly startled by his companion's seizing hold of him and shrieking out in her agony of shame—"Oh Rupert! Rupert!" For surely it was nothing less than shame, to her, caught in this clandestine interview!

The Lord of Pomeroy strode forward, his eyes glaring, his white features terribly livid in the moonlight. How stealthily he must have come up! And—how long had he been there?

(*To be continued.*)

THE WITCH AND THE SAUCEPAN.

WITCHCRAFT in the latter end of the nineteenth century? Are not you playing upon our credulity when you expect us to believe such a thing? Not so, we grieve to say. Almost every village in our favoured province of Ulster has its witch, and also its wise man or woman who possesses a counter-charm for witchcraft, however acquired.

The witch goes in and out of her neighbours' houses, and is treated with universal respect. The superstitious people, believing that she has the power of doing them serious injury, propitiate her with gifts, and she dwells among them unmolested.

It does not follow that she must be either old or ugly. The owner of the evil eye in one townland well known to the writer, happens to be a fair, delicate-looking young mother, possessor of a handsome cow, which she tends so carefully and feeds so well that she is able to clothe her children with the proceeds of the milk and butter. But her large churnings cause great heartburnings in the neighbourhood: it is firmly believed that every ounce of butter in excess of the usual quantity has been abstracted from her neighbours' churns—drawn through the keyhole perhaps, or spirited away by some other occult and mysterious process.

Nor must the witch of necessity be a Roman Catholic; the blue-eyed enchantress aforesaid is a Protestant: a respectable, but ignorant young woman, whose chief failing in educated eyes appears to be a violent temper.

Many are the spells resorted to by the credulous people to avert the evil influence.

An absurd instance of belief in witchcraft occurred very lately in the parish of Killea, Co. Donegal. A poor day labourer, father of a large family, managed to save enough money to buy a cow. His purchase did very well at first, but suddenly her milk failed, she became languid, and refused to eat. The distress of Brown and his wife was extreme. Their neighbours kindly sympathised, but warned them that they must certainly have an enemy, and enquired whether they had had any frequent visitor of late.

On thinking the matter over, both husband and wife recollected that a poor old woman, Rosanna Harrigan by name, had called at their house on three successive mornings, for the purpose of warming herself at their fire—that she had remained in the house for a considerable time, chatting pleasantly, and making friendly enquiries about their prosperity, particularly asking after the welfare of their new cow. Mrs. Brown remembered that she had fingered her rosary while

speaking, but, for all that, it might be that she had been working some spell at the same time.

The wise neighbours next suggested that it would be advisable to apply to some "knowledgable body" for a counter-spell; and Brown accordingly set out to visit an old man who lived a few miles beyond St. Johnston, and was supposed to have the gift of curing elfshot animals. Poor little Rosanna Harrigan's iniquity was related, and Brown was desired to go to the sexton of the meeting-house, to receive from his hand some clay from the grave of the last buried corpse there, to carry it carefully home, mix it with water, and rub the sick cow's back with the mixture.

Full of faith, Brown did as directed, and the cow recovered. Quite as ridiculous as the above is the well-known story of Moiley and the saucepan.

Moiley was a handsome Kerry cow, the property of William Jamison, a well-to-do farmer in the townland of Clashygowan. She stood in a warm byre with five companions, good milkers all of them, but not one so valuable as her brindled self. Moiley's milk yielded the thickest cream and yellowest butter that was ever carried to Derry market; and the quantity was as remarkable as the quality. It was well known that the three snowy pans in the left-hand corner of the dairy-shelf were filled with her milk alone; and Jamison's good fortune was commented upon by many a cabin fireside where the unlettered crones met to gossip about their neighbours' affairs.

"The master kept her milk by itself, an' feen a drap but it went intil the churn, when we were filling the butt that brought the biggest price in the market," said Becky Gallagher, a former servant at the farm, who had lately married a day labourer, and settled in one of the cottier houses.

Becky was a middle-aged, one-eyed, and harsh-featured woman, with a sinister and forbidding expression, which made her repulsive, independently of her ugliness. Good worker though she was, Jack Gallagher was not envied by his neighbours; but she was known to have a temper, and was therefore treated with a certain amount of respect by the inmates of the houses on either side.

"An' how will Moiley do with the new girl?" asked Mary Boyd, coming in to borrow a turf basket.

"Oh, bravely, I'll hold you!" replied the one-eyed woman; "she's cautious enough anyway. I went on an errand to the house this morning when she was churning, an' I saw her throw a lock of salt into the churn when she seen me come in. Nae harm 'ill come to Moiley with *her!*"

As Becky said this, an evil gleam came into her grey eye, and she looked as though she had no kind wishes for the new girl, or for her master.

"It wad be a pity if anything wad ail Moiley, or e'er a cow belonging to William Jamison," replied the last comer, pausing with

her turf-basket by the fireside, and looking gravely at Becky—"a civil, decent boy that never hurt chick nor child in his life."

The "civil, decent boy" was a grey-haired man of sixty, who had remained a bachelor from choice, overseeing his indoor concerns as thoroughly as he was able, but obliged to leave much to his servants.

Mrs. Boyd, though only the mistress of a cabin, had the honour of being his cousin, and therefore felt it incumbent upon her to visit the farm kitchen from time to time, and give his "girl" the benefit of her supervision. Much hatred had she incurred from Becky by so doing, but her presence now put the latter upon her guard.

"I'll teach the hussy to throw salt into her churn when *I* come in!" muttered she, as Mrs. Boyd left the cottage.

The new servant had complied with a very general superstition. Becky's frequent visits to the farmhouse byre and dairy had frightened her, and she could not believe that a good motive brought her so often. That Becky's one eye was an evil eye she felt perfectly convinced, and she had been told that a pinch of salt put into the churn when an envious neighbour happened to enter the house was a very potent counter-charm; so, desiring to be faithful to her employer, she had but acted up to her lights.

Had she been a nurse, she would have crossed the tongs upon the cradle when forced to leave her charge alone, for fairy influence was still powerful in the "back country" where she had been brought up. There, too, dwelt a witch who throve upon the fresh butter which she drew out of neighbours' churns through the key-holes: a witch who had once been pursued by the huntsmen for an entire morning in the form of a hare; had been followed to the door of a cabin, and discovered breathless and panting upon the bed, in her own human, and far from attractive, shape.

The new servant, knowing these things, was only, as we have said, doing her duty by her master in acting up to her lights.

But Becky Gallagher vowed vengeance. Moiley's milk began to fail from that day, until by degrees there remained but half a pan where there had been three full pans on the dairy shelf.

"Wha's come to Moiley, Peggy, my girl?" used Jamison to enquire, as he emptied the wretched pigginful into the pan.

Peggy could have attempted an answer, but was afraid to put her thought into words. The affair became so serious at length that the farmer went down to the cottier houses to consult his cousin, Mrs. Boyd. Shutting the door carefully, he sat down on a creepie in front of the turf fire, and proceeded leisurely to light his pipe, and smoke in silence. His cousin and her daughter Mary, a young girl of fifteen, felt sure some weighty revelation was coming, but they spun on, one each side of the hearth, and waited patiently until he should speak. Like his rugged Presbyterian forefathers, he was wont to think much and speak little; but the time for making a confidante was come; so he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, put it in his

waistcoat pocket, and turning his small, keen eyes slowly upon Mrs. Boyd, thus addressed her:

"I'm saying, Mary, Moiley's going dry, an' she's sax months off the calving."

"Save us, William!" and the two spinning-wheels stopped suddenly—"guide us an' save us, man, you dinna tell me sae!"

"Ay, Mary, it's nae lie I'm telling ye." There was another pause.

"I was minded," proceeded he at length, "to ax the minister's advice after meeting next Sabbath, for he's a man that has a power o' larning. What do *you* allow me to do, Mary?"

"Wait a wee, William," cried Mrs. Boyd eagerly, exchanging significant glances with her daughter; "dinna let a word out o' your mouth, gude or bad, but leave it to me. There's a very knowledgable woman lives up at Knockan, an' if anybody has put a spell on the cow, *she* can lift it. I'm weel acquaint wi' her, an' Mary, there, may run for her; but not a word, if you tak' my bidding."

She dropped her voice, and looked cautiously towards the door.

"I dinna know that I've an ill-wisher in the warld," replied Jamison, doubtfully.

"Hoot, William, *she'll* find that out: she's a knowledgable woman, I tell you! She'll know wha's come to Moiley."

The farmer's long and cautious face looked but half convinced; he thought over and over the whole circle of his neighbours and acquaintances, but could not believe he had an enemy; however, he had come to his cousin for advice, and it behoved him to abide by it. He went for the hundredth time to examine his sick cow, while young Mary, after receiving some explicit directions from her mother, set out for Knockan.

It was a lovely day, and the walk was extremely picturesque. Mary paused to draw breath at the very top of the hill, a few yards from the tiny thatched cabin where Mrs. Doolan, the wise woman, dwelt. She ran her fingers through her shock of matted hair, and turned her cheeks to catch the breeze that always blew up there, even on the warmest day, as she stood and gazed down upon the valley; but she had no idea that the view was in any wise beautiful or interesting.

There lay Jamison's farmhouse, his offices and rich fields, and the row of humbler abodes where his cottiers lived. Many another farmstead and lowly cabin, in the midst of cornfields whose exquisite green was just becoming tinged with a pale gold, lay spread out before her, with the reed-fringed lake, and the little island where once had stood the stately castle of an Irish king. The castle was gone, but crab-apple and hazel trees adorned the island, seagulls and plovers hovering over it in an airy, musical cloud, and lake and island were beautiful still.

Then far, far away arose the pale, shadowy mountains, not grey and frowning as they usually are in our damp climate, but sharing in the splendour imparted by the rare sunshine, which lit up thelandscape,

until gold and green, blue and purple, melted into one another, and shimmered in a tender haze.

Mary entered Mrs. Doolan's cottage. An old, bent woman, with grey hair and a quaint, ugly face, intersected with a hundred lines, sat crouching by the hearth, smoking her pipe.

"Will you be seated, jewel?" said she, politely, when the girl had made known her name. Mary thanked her, but remained standing while she explained that her mother had sent her on an errand to Mrs. Doolan, and mentioned William Jamison's cow.

"Sick, an' failed in her milk?" said the old woman, gravely, putting up her pipe and moving as quickly as she could towards the cupboard. "We maun see to that, Mary; we maun see to that! Wait a wee minute till I get my cloak an' this paper o' yerbs."

Her grey cloak was put on, a scarlet handkerchief wound round her head, her stick taken in her hand, a dirty-looking packet thrust into her pocket, and she was ready for the road.

"Now, Tom, you'll be civil an' decent, sir," commanded she, locking up the black cat, the geese, and the cock and hens, and taking the key of her cabin.

There was a business-like air in her proceedings that much impressed Mary; but she was not very garrulous on her way down hill: she made out the journey with difficulty, but gravely, as one who had an important work on hand.

Arrived at the farm, she and Mary went quietly into the kitchen by the back door.

"Run awa' to the town for a ha'p'orth o' new pins, Mary," said the wise woman.

Mary found the farmer, Peggy, and Mrs. Doolan all assembled in the byre on her return with the pins.

"Kneel down, girl," said the latter, "an' stick them pins up to the heads in the ground round the cow's stake. Ay, that'll do, bravely," as Mary obeyed, the farmer and servant looking on in respectful silence.

"Now, honey, you just tak' these yerbs and put them to boil in the wee tin on the kitchen fire; an' dinna, for your life, let anybody lift the lid. If man or woman opens the door an' comes into the kitchen, an' mak's over to the fire to lift the lid o' the wee tin, that'll be the one that put the spell upon the cow. William an' the girl an' me'll stop here, and go you an' do what I bid you."

Mary felt the full weight of the responsibility laid upon her: she looked from the farmer, who stared at his sick cow and said not a word, to the dirty paper of herbs which the crone held out to her.

"Mind what I bid you," repeated Mrs. Doolan, pressing the packet into her hand.

Very carefully she strewed the dried herbs on the bottom of the tin, filled it with spring water, set it upon the fire, and put on the lid, and while she waited for it to boil, employed herself in arranging the dishes at the dresser.

Thus engaged, her back was towards the door; but she soon heard quick steps outside, the latch was lifted, and Becky Gallagher, the one-eyed woman, hurrying into the kitchen, made her way up to the hearth, and was in the act of raising the lid, when Mary darted over to her in the very nick of time, caught her arm, and wrathfully commanded her to let the tin alone.

"Your tea is boiling over, Mary," replied the other, still endeavouring to raise the lid.

"That's not tea. You know very well that I mak' nae tea in this kitchen," returned the young girl. "You'll just let that tin alone!"

Baffled and confused, the woman went away, muttering that she had meant no offence.

"It was weel you didna let her lift the lid: if she had got lifting it an' looking in, Moiley wad ha' died for sartin," said the wise woman, when Mary, pale and breathless, carried the herb potion into the byre, and related her adventure.

"To think of Becky!" said the grave farmer, his long face an inch longer than usual from the shock—"to think of Becky!" he repeated slowly.

"I know'd rightly the way it wad be," replied Mrs. Doolan; "but it's gude we hae found out the one that cast the spell: she'll no offer to stir a cow belonging to you again, ye may be sure o' that."

So Moiley was given the mixture, while the wise woman muttered incantations, and from that day the three milk-pans were as full as ever, and the butter churned therefrom as yellow and abundant.

Becky talked loudly in the cottages about Mary Boyd's impertinence to her when she wanted to help her by preventing her tea from boiling over; but she met with cold replies and suspicious looks on all sides, and soon made up her mind that it would be well for her to persuade her husband to seek another service at the next hiring day. Mrs. Doolan grew in the esteem of her neighbours. It was not her habit to take money for such good offices as she had rendered William Jamison; but she did not refuse a comfortable glass of spirits, an ounce of tobacco, some tea and sugar, or a small piece of the superior butter which her incantations had restored to Moiley. She managed to make a very good living out of her supernatural lore.

As to the farmer, he rejoiced that he had not troubled the minister with the history of his dairy perplexities, but had instead applied to his cousin Mrs. Boyd, whom he regarded ever afterwards as a most sensible woman.

The transaction made some little stir in the townland of Clashygowan, and at last came round to the minister's ears. Jamison was a steady member of the congregation, an elder, and a communicant, and always paid his pew rent to the day: the minister felt it his duty to remonstrate with him upon his encouragement of the popular superstition; but must do so delicately and gently, lest he should offend so valuable a prop of the manse and meeting-house.

They were seated at tea in "the room," a stately apartment, seldom used. The minister and his host grew confidential over their tea: the story of Moiley's dangerous illness and wonderful recovery was related, Jamison was congratulated, and the minister enquired what had injured the cow.

It was then that the tale of Becky's iniquity, and of Mrs. Doolan's skill, came forth.

"Oh, Jamison, do you really believe that?" asked Mr. Long, with a smile, when he had heard the whole story.

"What can I do, sir? Sure I seen it with my own eyes. I wasna' too forward to credit it, but seeing's believing, they say."

"The nineteenth century, Jamison," continued the minister, piteously; "and one Robertson, one Church Education, and two National Schools within a circuit of three miles, let alone the meeting-house and the minister!"

"Do you say there's no such things as witches, sir?" asked the farmer, turning upon him.

"Certainly I do; I say so most emphatically."

"Well, sir, what do you say to this?" replied Jamison, triumphantly opening his pictorial Bible at the picture of Samuel and the Witch of Endor.

"She was no witch," returned the minister, rousing himself like a war horse who scents the battle. "The woman was horribly terrified when she saw Samuel: she would have pretended, no doubt, that she saw him, or she would have contrived some optical illusion for the purpose of imposing upon Saul; but Samuel was raised without her power, and surely no one was more terrified and surprised at his appearance ——"

"A message for the minister." The door was thrown open, and a little errand boy rushed in. "The mistress is ill—you're to drive on for the doctor, sir, this minute. I was to bid you not be putting off your time."

The minister was reluctantly forced to take his leave, assuring Jamison that he would soon return to finish their conversation.

"Ay, converse away," said the farmer grimly to himself, as he carefully folded up his cherished picture. "Converse away! But ye'll no converse me into believing that the book is wrang, and that there was nae Witch o' Endor. Not believe in the Witch o' Endor!" repeated he, when barring his door for the night, and there was both sorrow and scorn in his tone.

No matter how the interrupted conversation may be finished at some future time, Mr. Long has made a fatal impression upon Jamison: he *may*, indeed, continue to attend meeting and pay his stipend, but it is a question whether he will ever again look upon the minister as a sound teacher or orthodox divine.

THE COMET.

THERE was great commotion in the village. Some of the men had been in the neighbouring town, and in the inn there had read the county paper, and had come home full of the astounding news that a comet was rushing headlong into space, precipitating itself straight upon our planet; so that, as the astronomers calculated, it must swallow us up on the 12th of August, 1872.

The village of A—— lies in a remote corner of Austria, and our good people do not come into contact with the ever-progressing world beyond its limits. Consequently they are rather backward in the knowledge of natural science, though far from being dull or uninterested in things lying nearer to them than the stars in the heavens.

But now, this was a thing to stir up their interest in astronomy: a comet coming straight down upon the earth. A comet: a thing imagined so far away that until now no one had dreamt of troubling about it, except only to consider its appearance in the sky as a sign of war and various other kinds of woe.

The villagers quite understood there was no fun in the matter. The learned astronomer himself, from whose work an extract had been published in the paper, had his apprehensions as to what effect this violent meeting of comet and earth would have on the latter; and although the men of A—— did not understand the burden of his learned suppositions, still it set them thinking, and brought them to the conclusion that one might well tremble before the consequences of such an unheard of collision.

Would it be the end of the world?—of the stars beginning to fall from heaven? But the comet was not falling after all—it was madly rushing straight upon us. How dreadful! What was the purport of its singular behaviour—was it coming to destroy the earth with fire?

There was a great deal of talk about the new and strange matter but no one was the wiser for it. At last the bearers of the news, only half credulous themselves, accompanied by those who refused to believe one iota of the tale, repaired to the schoolmaster's house, a neat whitewashed building, standing in the middle of a well-cultivated orchard.

But if the orchard testified to good culture, the schoolmaster's books told a very different tale; they had been thrown into a corner of a lumber-closet many years before, and had never seen daylight since. The alphabet, a small volume of Bible stories, and one or two others, were all that was requisite for his daily use. From these few books he had taught one generation of boys and girls after another to read, write, cipher, and sing; and for thirty-seven years he had never felt the need of increasing his literary store.

He had another book though—a manuscript one, in his own handwriting, out of which he sometimes read to young and old. It was a bulky volume, composed of a great number of copy-books, fastened together and neatly bound in cloth by the author himself. In it he had written his experience of practical gardening, of brewing, cultivating bees, nursing domestic animals, and the like; and the villagers were in the habit of consulting him in preference to anyone else. There was no husbandman equal to him in the place, and he was held in greater respect by the people for this than if he had possessed the wisdom of a professor of the university. For thirty-seven years he had worked in the village without quitting it, except for an excursion into the mountains or a trip to the next town.

Now the schoolmaster had read about the comet before anyone else in the place; but as a wise man he kept silence on a matter he could not explain. Rack his brain as he would he could not revive any slumbering recollection of astronomy, nor find anything to aid his better understanding or enable him to expound the subject to others.

He was, however, not quite unprepared for the visit, and when the men came to him he thought it best to take a cheerful view of the case, and dilated to them on his experience that many things, looking strange in the distance, are quite natural and harmless when viewed close at hand.

"So let's expect the fellow with a calm mind," he said. "We will see what he is like when he comes; no use troubling about him before the time."

"But won't he set the world on fire?" they asked.

"We'll put it out if he does," he returned, confidently.

"There would be more flames, I warrant, than all the water in our wells could quench," said one.

"It may not touch us after all," said the schoolmaster, always inclined to hope for the best. "Why shouldn't it fall far away on yonder hills, into the wood, or beyond it into the lake?"

There was a general laugh. If it would but tumble into the lake and drown itself, they would drag it out when cool and have a good look at it, and then exhibit it in the market-place. Yes, stick it up on a pole with its tail turned upwards, and have a dance around it.

After this the good old man thought the occasion a fitting one to produce a few bottles of his own growth, and the cheering influence of a glass of wine dispelled in a great measure the rather gloomy impression the gravity of the matter had made upon their minds. They left the house but little comforted though, and very much inclined to believe that there really was a comet coming, this fact having been tacitly admitted by the schoolmaster.

The Pfarrer's (Monsieur le Curé) house is not far distant from the school. A green slope, cut by an allée of poplar trees, leads up from the latter to the church, and immediately opposite stands the "Pfarrei," or Pfarrhaus.

Amongst those who were most eager to call upon the priest was—to everyone's surprise—old Blasius.

Old Blasl never entered the church, and the minister of grace was to him only the person to whom he had to pay his tithe in grain, vegetables, &c. He would look away when he chanced to meet the old Pfarrer, that he might save himself the trouble of taking off his hat to him. Not to say that Blasl never prayed !—oh, he prayed. Most fervently did he pray every night that no fire, water, or thief might come near the treasure he had hidden deep in the earth under his bed, and in which his whole heart was bound up.

And now, would all these worshipped coins go to destruction, with the rest of the world? Perhaps something more might be learned about the matter at the Pfarrer's; therefore he entered the house whose threshold his foot had not crossed since the time of his marriage, thirty years before.

There was the scrupulous neatness and stillness reigning in the Pfarrei peculiar to a priest's habitation, showing that there was no wife or children to break the monastic order.

The Herr Pfarrer of A—— was a very aged man, past eighty at the time of our tale; and his sister, about eight or nine years younger than himself, kept house for him. A young priest, his "co-operator," who lived in a back room, was the third inmate of the spacious mansion, and an old servant the fourth. That was all.

The Pfarrer received the men with his usual kindliness; was very glad to see them, and happy to be able to give them his advice and consolation. For that purpose he administered to them a good dose of common-place truths, all very good in themselves, and suitable for any tribulation whatever. After having warmly assured them that God would not forsake them if they did not turn from Him, he dismissed them; and they departed, more, less, or not at all comforted, according to each man's nature.

Before they had all left the hall, Frau Barbara, the curé's sister, noiselessly emerged from a corridor, and, catching hold of Blasl's sleeve, she whispered to him: "Blasl, I am glad I have an opportunity of speaking to you. What is all this about your daughter? Surely you will think better of it before you make your poor child miserable for life?"

"Has she been and complained of me?" he enquired angrily.

"She *has* been here; you know she always comes to help me on busy days. The poor child cried bitterly—and no wonder, after being engaged to that nice young man, Lorenz, and now seeing her engagement broken off by her father, without any just cause or reason. Surely you will not do this?"

"That is my own affair," he gruffly interrupted. "I suffer no one to meddle with my concerns; you might have known that before now, Frau Barbara." And impatiently he turned to leave the hall.

"Nay, you must not leave me without listening to another word.

You may have had your own reasons for breaking off with Lenz, but surely, Blasl, you cannot think of giving Maria to Steffl—Steffl, the scandal of the neighbourhood? You must know that Steffl is an unprincipled man, a good-for-nothing, a spendthrift —— "

"Steffl is no spendthrift! he is—he has—no matter what!—you wouldn't understand my motives; and I really don't see that I need account for my actions to anyone in this world, Frau Barbara."

"Not in this world, Blasl; no, not in *this!* but, mind you, this world is coming to grief, they say. Blasl, Blasl! think of this! If it *be* true: if really in a few days this world, with all our trumpery goods and treasures, is going to destruction: how shall we appear there, before the judgment seat, divested of all our earthly riches?"

For a moment the old man stared at her with frightened, glazed eyes; he staggered, and turning away, tottered down the slope. Her words had startled him to the heart.

Old Blasl had not always been the hard, inflexible miser he was now. He used in his younger years to be of a jolly, easy disposition, and rather extravagant habits. When quite unexpectedly inheriting a considerable sum of money, he was suddenly seized with love for those shining, sparkling coins—the passionate, jealous love of a miser. He loved the coins for themselves, not for the comfort they might have brought into his house; therefore he would not put them out to interest. He could not make up his mind to loose his grasp upon them for one minute; would not trust anyone with the sight of them. He dug a deep hole under the boards upon which his bed rested, and therein he hid his treasure, and there from henceforward lay his heart, buried with it. He saved and stinted and scraped together in order to hoard up one piece of gold or silver after another with the rest. But his life was a troubled one, and grew more and more so as his treasure increased. Night and day he could not rest from anxiety lest anyone should discover its hiding-place, or lest any kind of danger should befall his cottage, which enclosed the cherished idol.

Besides his money, Blasl cherished a daughter, the last remaining one of a numerous family. He loved her in his way: as the future possessor of his wealth; who would, in her turn—so he hoped—worship it with her whole heart. He held her in high respect, but not without keen pangs of jealousy, raised by the thought that he *must* some day, whether he liked it or not, leave everything to her. These fits of jealousy grew more frequent as he advanced in age, and poor Maria felt surprised and shocked at the dislike to her he evinced at moments without any visible cause. She never guessed the truth; she did not know the secret of her father's room. He had not been a hard father to her—far from it, for he had not been a father at all; he never noticed her or cared for her, neither missed her when she was away, nor seemed glad to see her return to him.

Still, in spite of all that, in spite of the utter want of parental

affection—poor Maria had lost her mother when she was an infant—she had not been an unhappy child. She had grown up amongst her kind neighbours. They loved the lonely little girl, who would come to them in search of all the comforts and joys she missed at home.

A lovely, bright-eyed child was Maria, with an active, helpful spirit: always eager to learn, and immediately turning to account what she had learnt, either in her own home or for others. She was sure to be on the spot wherever there was anything going on; and helping her neighbours about the house and garden, in the fields and woods, she learnt to understand all kinds of work. At fifteen, when the old servant of the house—a stern, taciturn, uncongenial woman—died, she was able and willing to turn to, and managed to keep her father's house in the accustomed order, so that the old man scarcely noticed any change.

Amongst all those who loved Maria, she had two particular friends. Of one we will speak later; the other was Herr Schmitt, the schoolmaster, who certainly was her very best friend, because the most disinterested.

The child's brightness, her eagerness to learn, soon struck her master; he found in this little girl a mind far superior to that of the usual run of children. He gave her private lessons, walked with her about the woods and fields, and in talking to her found ways and means to impart a great deal of knowledge no one else in the village aspired to. He seldom failed to bring her something to read when coming from town, and every Christmas-eve there was sure to be a story-book for Maria under the Christmas tree at the schoolmaster's. Thus the very loneliness of her life was brightened by joys that few other children knew, and which helped her to bear the dulness of her father's house.

A few weeks before our story begins we might have beheld Maria grown up into a handsome blue-eyed lass of eighteen, with a wealth of golden hair, a bright smile, and a merry song on her lips, gladdening one's sight with her appearance of youthful grace, strength, health, and freshness. But now smile and song have died away, and sighs and tears have taken their place.

Blasl, Blasl! how could you have the heart?—oh! but his heart lies in an old iron pot many feet under the ground.

When Maria was five years old she and a neighbour's son, a few years older than herself, pledged their troth to each other—just as children *will* do. But in this case the attachment, instead of being lessened or forgotten in the course of years, grew with them, and every year added to its strength. This contributed greatly to Maria's happiness, and accounts for the brightness of her disposition.

Lorenz was a boy of high and buoyant spirits, and the course of their true love seemed to run quite smoothly; for when he talked to Maria's father, the latter found no objection to the match, and the two were solemnly betrothed. They were both rather young to be

married at once, and Blasl had a reason of his own for putting the marriage off. He was loth to give to his daughter her portion, the two thousand florins she had from her mother—which naturally had remained in his keeping—not to speak of any dowry on his part, which he never dreamt of being asked for in his lifetime.

So far all went well. But Blasl had given his consent on the ground of an inheritance Lenz expected from his great-uncle, who had promised to make him his heir. When the latter died, however, no will could be found. People said it had been done away with, which was very likely. So the money was divided between a number of relations, and Lenz's share became a small one. Blasl broke off the engagement at once: no tears, no supplications could prevail against his decision. Nay, not satisfied with this, he wanted to force another husband upon his daughter, which, to the dismay of the whole village, was no other than Steffl—the very last man people would have thought he would fix upon. It was shocking! They talked of witchcraft, and were not far from the point. Steffl had bewitched the old man by a magic power old Blasl could not withstand.

Stefan had been a soldier, and had only returned to the village about a year ago. He was soon considered the plague of the neighbourhood—ruining the boys by inducing them to spend their nights in public-houses, running after every girl, working when he pleased, and scattering his small earnings—Steffl was a regular rake, there was no mistake about it.

Amongst the girls he made love to there was one, a quiet, rather weak-minded lassie, who lived with an old aunt of hers in a little hut in the woods. Consequently she did not hear much of the talk in the village. And even if she had heard about Steffl's loose life, would she have believed it? No, for love is equally deaf and blind, and Lisbeth loved the handsome, dashing visitor who condescended to seek her in her poor home.

Poor Lisbeth! she believed every word Stefan said, and thought herself solemnly engaged to him for life. It pleased Stefan to go on as if he intended to marry her in a very short time, and make her the mistress of the splendid house and all the riches he possessed in some very far-off country.

Now, when Steffl heard of Lenz's changed circumstances, he thought the moment had come to win rich Blasl's fair daughter for himself. It is not astonishing that he should have tried for such a prize, but that he should have succeeded was most extraordinary. The poorest man in the neighbourhood would have refused his child to a man like Steffl. However, he *did* succeed—at least with the father: he had chosen a sure way to lead him straight to his aim.

After having for some time given the old man hints that he was keeping a secret from the villagers, he one day made him a startling confidence. He was concealing a treasure; yes, a sackful of gold. Neither more nor less than twenty thousand florins, all in gold! and

he behaved like a beggar before the village from fear of being robbed. But how did he get possession of so much gold? Ah! he had been a soldier. Everybody knows what strange fortunes may befall a man in times of war. When his eight years of service were over he left his regiment instead of taking a re-engagement, as he had always intended to do, and straightway travelled home with his treasure.

Old Blasius listened with every fibre of his gold-thirsty heart. His soul was so full of Steffl's strange luck that there was no room left for doubt. His consideration for Steffl was great from this moment. The two grew fast friends, to the wonder of the whole village and of poor Maria. They were constantly seen walking together, and Steffl sat for hours and hours at Blasl's, worrying Maria with his most unwelcome courtship.

Blasl, who had never treated his daughter harshly, now behaved with cruelty towards her: he forgot himself so far at times as to strike her, using every means to force Steffl upon her notice. Oh, the miserable life poor Maria now led! Her father had threatened to kill her if she attempted to see Lenz, who was at present working at some distant farm, and could only come to A—— on Sundays. Moreover, he locked her up in the house, and he and Steffl kept watch over her always on that day, so that she could not even go to church.

And poor Lisbeth, when she found herself forsaken for rich Blasl's daughter? In her despair she ran away, and was seen no more. Her aunt came down to the village to look for her in every house, to ask everybody after her: no one had seen her.

One day a little boy, who was crab fishing on the shallow border of the river, found a silk kerchief entangled in the reeds; and people by this knew poor Lisbeth's fate. They openly reproached Steffl with her death; but he did not care what they said, and inwardly rejoiced that his good luck had removed the only stone in his way.

"It was very wise of her," thus his thoughts ran, "to do herself what I should have been obliged to do for her, had she meant to come forward and stand in my way."

II.

When Blasl came home from the Pfarrer's he first scolded his daughter well for having complained of him to Frau Barbara; then, as a punishment, he locked her up in her room. He had a double reason for doing the latter, for when he had assured himself that all the doors and shutters of the house were well fastened, he lit a little lamp, removed his huge bedstead with a vigour one would not have expected in that shrivelled form, lifted the boards, and shovelled and scraped both with spade and hands until he brought his precious iron pot to light. He then tenderly lifted it out, uncovered it with one trembling hand, and approached the lamp with the other to let the

contents sparkle in its rays, his tears streaming down upon the gold as he did so. When he had wept over it to his heart's content he covered it up, buried it again, and put everything over it in its accustomed place. Then he blew out the light, opened the shutters, and went about his day's work with a heavy heart.

The days ran on; people's most fervent wishes could not keep one of them back; and as the dreaded time approached their apprehensions grew boundless. Everybody now believed in the comet, and that it would bring the end of the world with it!

The peasants were not so much afraid for their own lives—they knew that death might take them by surprise at any time—they grieved for the impending destruction of all their earthly possessions, the fruit of not their own labour only, but of that of their fathers and grandfathers for many generations back, and which they had always hoped to leave behind them to their children and children's children. Whatever they now looked on seemed to preach to them of the vanity of all earthly pride; whatever each used to take the greatest delight in became now the source of the bitterest grief.

Thus one would look with tearful eyes on the ranges of well-cured hams and sausages in his larder, agonized by the thought that no one would enjoy those stored-up dainties in the future. Another would walk about his fields, shaking his head mournfully at the plentiful corn, doomed before it was ripe for the scythe. A third lamented over the fine old trees in his wood; there was not even time left for cutting them down and marketing the timber; and if it could be done, where would be the use? Men grew lax in their work, maidens gave up spinning for their marriage outfits, women neglected their households, children had dreams about the comet's arrival.

The good Pfarrer had prayers said to calm their minds; the schoolmaster visited from house to house with comforting words; all was of no avail: the panic grew with the flying hours, and reached its climax when the awful day arrived.

The 12th of August dawned upon them rather sultry and heavy; there was something oppressive in the air that added to their alarm. Every passing hour increased their anguish. A thick fog, which covered parts of the country at nightfall—a quite unheard-of phenomenon at this season—terrified them. Anxiously they watched the gradual dying out of daylight. Would it ever dawn upon them again?

As if by common accord, they all expected the comet in the night; it never struck them that it might in its career meet the earth in the daytime; and it seemed most natural in a comet to fix upon midnight for its extraordinary performance—as all unearthly appearances have ever come at that critical moment, when one day meets another to part in the same instant for ever.

No one would go to bed on that night; that was the tacit agreement.

The inn was crowded that evening. Most of those who had no

particular home to take care of assembled there, to work themselves up by drink and talk to that pitch of courage necessary to meet such an event as this. Some of the younger men tried with fun and jokes to raise the dismal tone of the conversation at first indulged in. They laughed, sang, drank, and played, and were the merrier as they believed it was for the last time they had met together in their favourite place of resort.

But fathers and sons kept at home with their own people. Now and then a friend or relation would look in, trying both to bring and carry away better cheer. Neighbours agreed to watch together; all the doors stood open, the windows were bright, the whole village presented a most unusual aspect.

After nightfall the fog cleared away, and the stars twinkled with uncommon brightness, as people thought, and many an anxiously inquiring glance was sent up towards them.

Blasl's house was one of the dullest on that night; the old miser could not, even on the brink of death, go to the expense of an extra candle. The lamp flickered dismally on the hearth. He kept his shutters closed, and only opened the door now and then, putting his head out to see whether Steffl was coming.

Steffl! his solace, his help, his comfort. He had kept up the old man's spirits by repeatedly assuring him that there was no comet coming. He had promised to keep watch with them through that anxious night. But he had only been with them for one minute in the morning, and had not returned.

At dusk Lenz had suddenly stood at Blasl's door. Maria gave a little shriek, and would have run to meet him, but Blasl stepped between the two lovers. "What dost thou want here?" he cried.

"I want to shake hands with you and Maria; it may be for the last time in this world, you know."

"Nonsense," cried Blasl, angrily; "thou art not on any pretence to come in or to speak to my daughter. Let me shut the door."

"Nay, Blasl," said the young man, "I have done nothing to forego your esteem. Why refuse me the little favour I ask for?"

"Get thee hence, I say!'

"You ought not to behave like that: it is a solemn night. Think of what may come!"

"I do not need thee to teach me what to think. I am master here, and I forbid thee to look at my daughter any longer. Away!"

"Nay, father," said Maria, gently pushing past him, "there is no harm in shaking hands with an old friend. Here is my hand, Lenz. Oh! if the world *would* but come to an end this night!"

Lenz's eyes filled with burning tears as he grasped her hand and looked close into her haggard, tearworn face. But old Blasl, exasperated, tore them asunder and banged the door in Lenz's face.

As the young man hastened away, not minding whither his steps led him, he met the schoolmaster.

"Do not go far away," said he, after having listened to Lenz's account of his visit to Blasl. "Keep in the neighbourhood. This is a strange night, and things may happen we are not looking for. Maria may have need of thee."

Blasl did not attempt to hide his disappointment on seeing the schoolmaster enter instead of the expected Steffl. But Herr Schmitt took no notice: he talked to the daughter, who sat weeping in the darkest corner of the room. Poor Maria began to rally by-and-by. After all everything was not lost: she was not Steffl's wife yet, and the comet might step between them for aught anyone could say. Steffl could not trouble her in the other world; she felt as sure of that as of being united to Lenz there. How she hoped and wished for the end of the world—surely the only one who did so!

Meanwhile her father kept running up and down, mumbling to himself in a wild incoherent way, opening and shutting the door a dozen times in succession. No Steffl came.

Other friends dropped in—not because they cared for Blasl, who had scorned their fear all the past anxious weeks—but on account of his daughter, whom they would not forsake in such an extremity.

Everybody agreed there was something wonderful in the appearance of the sky, although they could not explain what it was, and their definitions were contradictory. Fear magnified what they saw, and their imagination worked upon the least incident.

"Did you see that?"

"See what—what?"

"The shooting stars—quite a shower of stars. That must be the beginning of ——"

They pressed to the door. The schoolmaster took Maria near the window, and opened the shutter to see whether there would be any more falling stars. Blasl alone would not look out: he stood in the middle of the room, tearing his hair and crying for Steffl.

"Steffl?" said the last comer, "has he not been here? He left us at the inn hours ago, saying he was going to you. Where in the world can he be?"

"He had had several glasses of wine," said another; "but that couldn't have hurt him. He is used to more."

"Do you mean to say Steffl has not been seen since dusk?" enquired one, looking in through the window. "I think then he has left the village."

"Left the village!" shrieked Blasl. "You are mad, man; what can you mean?"

"I mean that at dusk I saw Steffl running on the highroad to W——. I wanted to stop him, but he would not hear. He yelled out something about the end of the world, and rushed on frantically. He scared me out of my wits: I was never so frightened in my life. The comet's advent couldn't startle me more."

"Steffl gone!" moaned Blasl, wringing his hands. "Steffl gone; and his treasure! Has he taken his treasure?"

They thought he was raving; and he, fearing he had said too much, stopped abruptly. He threw himself upon his bed, crying and groaning. Then wildly starting up, he wailed out, "Is it coming then, friends? is the end of the world coming?"

But they could not attend to him: they were much too busy in observing "something fiery" sweeping all across the sky.

"There—there!" They all left the room in a hurry, and even the schoolmaster followed, after having whispered a word in Maria's ear that made her heart beat high.

"Steffl, Steffl, thou hast forsaken me! What! have they all gone? Oh, my poor child, we shall die alone, forsaken by all the world!"

For the first time something like parental affection broke through the hard crust that had so long closed over the heart of the father.

"No, you are not alone," said the schoolmaster, re-entering with Lenz; "your friends are staying with you. If we must die, we will die together."

Blasl caught hold of their hands: it is hard to say whether in his agony he recognised Lenz or not. "Stop with me," he entreated; "midnight is coming on. Oh, do not forsake us!"

Just then the old clock in the corner struck a quarter to twelve, and the schoolmaster said solemnly, "Yes, Blasl, the hour is at hand; let us prepare for it. Blasl, there is little time left for you to make up for all the grief you caused your poor child!"

Blasl stared at him in bewilderment. "What can I do?"

"You will—won't you—give your daughter to this young man: she was and still is his promised wife, you know. Nothing could break their betrothal. Now, Blasl, say you will," added he, shaking him by the arm to wake him out of his state of torpor.

"No, I won't," said Blasl, sitting down upon his bed and folding his arms in a determined manner.

For some time the schoolmaster spoke to no purpose. At last he pointed to the clock: "One minute wanting; now, let us prepare for the awful moment. Blasl, will you?" But Blasl shook his head.

"You won't?—it's going to strike!"

The clock began, and up started Blasl, groping as if in darkness for the lovers' hands eagerly stretched out towards him. Joining them, he kept them in his grasp, calling out, "I've done it—done it, schoolmaster; you see I have done it. God will be merciful to me for their sakes."

"Declare," urged Herr Schmitt, "that you give your daughter Maria to Lorenz Steiner to wife."

"I *do*, I *do!*" cried Blasl, shaking with the fever of anguish, and tightening his iron grip over their united hands.

"And these our friends and neighbours are witnesses," said Herr Schmitt solemnly, turning to those who had re-entered the room.

"We are witnesses," echoed they.

"It is done," exclaimed the schoolmaster, with a sigh of relief, whilst Blasl sank back on his bed, covering his face with his hands to shut out the coming crash.

There was a solemn pause——

Nothing was to be heard—not a sound outside or inside the house for a long while. At last the peasants began to wonder amongst each other whether the clock could be right—whether midnight was past; but when the quarter struck they breathed more freely, and they gave expression to their opinion that the danger might be over. The comet might have passed the earth without touching it—they had all felt its presence; it must have passed very close to them; the earth had had a narrow escape!

Blasl raised his head and listened attentively to their words, which became more and more cheerful as the hand of the clock neared the half hour.

"Why are you two there together?" cried he suddenly, as his eye fell on the young people, who stood at the window hand in hand.

"Ho, ho!" said the schoolmaster, stepping between him and the pair; "these two belong to each other: you cannot part them any more; you have given your daughter to be the wife of Lenz Steiner."

"I have, have I?"

"You have," they all answered; "and we are witnesses thereto."

"Ah!" cried he, clapping his hands with a childish triumph, "I have not said a word about the money; she shan't have a penny!"

"Never mind," said Lenz, in happy tones, "Maria and I will work to live—won't we, Maria?—and never trouble you for money!"

"We will," replied Maria. "Be kind to us, father; give us your blessing instead of money!"

In the little hut in the wood two poor lonely women had also watched for the comet: Lisbeth and her aunt. For Lisbeth was not drowned. The wind had carried off her kerchief as she crossed the bridge, and must have blown it into the river. She had merely left the village, which had become hateful to her, and found service at some distant farm. But when the rumours of the comet and the end of the world reached her, she felt pangs of remorse for having left her kind old relative without any warning: she *must* go home to comfort her. And so it came to pass that Lisbeth walked towards A—— on the evening of the 12th of August, purposely choosing the time of dusk for her return.

She was shocked and frightened at the fog which stretched over the low-lying ground near the river, but rather glad of it still, for it would help her to escape notice. Having come half-way across the bridge, she heard another step coming towards her from the other end, and soon she saw a tall figure advancing which she at once

recognized to be—the very last person she would have wished to meet—Steffl! Tremblingly she leant against the railing, giving him room to pass on the narrow planks, but he, suddenly perceiving her close before him, white and motionless, veiled by the fog, was seized with the terror of guilt. He fell back, and with the shrill cry, "The dead are rising! the end of the world is surely coming!" he ran away as if chased by fiends; and was never seen again.

Neither Steffl nor the comet was heard of any more. Who knows whether the comet, on meeting the earth, was not equally shocked, and jumping out of his route went straying into space? At any rate, comet and Steffl had gone together, and no one wished for the return of either the one or the other.

After Steffl had been away for some time his room was opened. Blasl, who had hovered about it, *would* be present, but to his great astonishment no treasure could be found.

Three weeks after the terrible night the good old Pfarrer cried for joy when he married Lenz and Maria, who were both his special favourites. Maria *did* not carry a penny out of her father's house. She followed her husband to the farm, his present home, where she found employment amongst the women; it was not the life of a servant she led there, though; they all respected her as rich Blasl's daughter, and considered her volunteering in service a great condescension.

Two years passed. Old Blasl's life had become more and more secluded, until no one ever saw him leave his house during the day, but in the night he had taken to carrying his treasure from place to place all over his garden, unburying and reburying it constantly. There was but one thing dawning on his clouded mind: the wish to hide the money so well that even after his death it should not be found by any one.

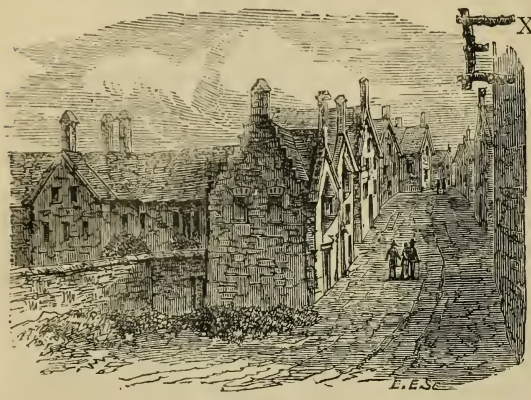
When one day he suddenly died, the schoolmaster, who for Maria's sake had watched him, was able to show her, her husband, and the magistrates he had sent for, the place where he had seen him digging last. They found a vast amount of money—much more than they could have ever expected.

They bought land, and Lorenz works on it after the schoolmaster's precept, and is getting on to have a model farm. Children's voices now ring through the new house which Lenz and Maria built on the height opposite the church and the old Pfarrhaus.

MARIE ORM.

THE ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood, Author of "Through Holland."



Street in Kirkwall.

EXCITEMENT does not seem to belong of right to Orkney: and any event disturbing the even tenour of its way appears out of place. Day succeeding day sees no change. The inhabitants live a life of peace and possess this charm: for the most part they know and are friendly with each other: one large family or community with separate interests. Every day of the week is calm and uneventful; but the Sunday is most especially so. In Kirkwall will be found more churches and chapels than the visitor could reasonably expect. The United Presbyterians muster in the largest and most popular numbers. The Established Church of England is a small but somewhat tasteful building; and the service, all things considered, was particularly well performed. Even the Roman Catholics were last year building themselves a chapel.

Each of my Sundays in Kirkwall was signalled by magnificent weather. The island and the water came out in all their beauty of colouring. The hills around were almost grand in a quietness and repose, a glow of sunshine and purple air that seemed made to do honour to the Day of Rest. Turning your back upon the town, you might wander for many a mile into the country and meet no human being. The island might have been uninhabited. Here and there, at long intervals, through an open cottage door, would come a smell of burning peat; a delicious, homely aroma, suggestive of Sunday, because so pure and primitive; which becomes for ever associated with one's pleasanter recollections of these islands.

Returning into the town, the people were wending their way in twos and threes and half dozens to their respective churches: men and women in their best attire, worn with an air if not a grace suggestive of the words of the great preacher who declared that all is vanity. It seemed all day a perpetual going to church. The services were long, and in passing from the shorter Anglican service,

the psalm-singing proceeding from Scotch lungs, was a sufficient testimonial to the purity of Orkney air; nowise lacking in energy, if it a little failed in harmony and melody.

But the Orcadians do not look upon themselves as Scotch. Like the Shetlanders, they are a race—almost a law—unto themselves: apart. It offends them mightily to be called or considered Scotchmen. They esteem themselves as something far better. This feeling is, perhaps, still more apparent in Shetland, where, if they wish to pay any one a bad compliment they liken him to a Scotchman. There is also rivalry and jealousy between the Orcadians and the Shetlanders; and they would no more claim kindred and affinity with each other than with the despised Scotch, or the Great Mogul. "The Shetlanders are very different from you," I remarked to an Orcadian on my return from Shetland. "Oh, yes!" he replied, raising himself to his full proportions and tones: "we are so very much in advance of them." I was silenced, for, as far as the laws of good breeding permitted, I had desired to express a somewhat contrary opinion.

Finery, like flirting, is, I suppose, inherent in all the daughters of Eve; whether these qualities are equally strong in the sons of Adam is not for these pages to determine. It was doubtless this love of finery that made the town of Kirkwall so much like a painted rainbow during the days of the Lammas fair. If it was curious to see the people arriving from the neighbouring isles, it was no less so to watch their departure when all was over; the fun and the noise, the rough and ready love-making: until the return of another year. Boat after boat would put off, and sail out to sea with its heavy load, amidst laughter and commotion strangely out of keeping with the sober Scotch character. But it is a question, which may be asked by the way, how far the Scotch deserve their reputation for soberness and a phlegmatic temperament. I have seen more demonstrativeness in Scotland than in England: big, bearded men, on a railway platform, meet and embrace, and give each other the kiss of peace, like two gushing school-girls, where an Englishman would content himself with such a hand grasp as few but an Englishman know aught about.

The boats launching off with the visitors from the fair were of many sizes, but all crowded. Particularly so was the small steamer going to the North Isles. There was scarcely standing, certainly not moving room, on the decks fore and aft. Long after the removal of the gangway, tardy passengers were running down, and, leaping to the steamer, clung to the sides and climbed over, very much as a cat scrambles over a wall. Nuts and sweatmeats were pelted by the travellers at those on shore as parting benedictions; and plenty of dry Scotch humour raised shouts of laughter. This was the very tail end of the fair; and when the steamer had put off, looking dangerously loaded, all might be said to be over.

As with the coast of Great Britain, so it is with that of Orkney. The East coast, or the more protected, from the North Foreland to Caithness is more or less flat and unsheltered. Towards the west the coast gradually rises, and to the full force of the Atlantic presents a bold and mighty front. So in Orkney the east, or less exposed coast is flat and low, whilst in the west the highest hills are found.

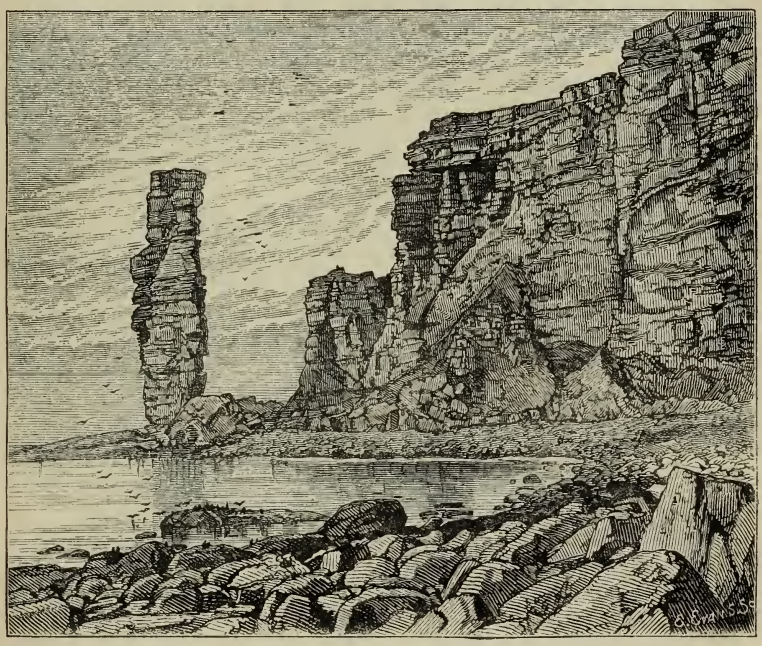
There are a good many birds in Orkney, but some, such as the golden eagle, have become rare. There is the peregrine falcon and the merlin. The rock-lark—a very different bird from the sky-lark—flits from rock to rock, and does not soar. When on the wing it has a sharp note without melody. There are sparrows that build in holes in the rocks, and old buildings, and the sides of houses that chance to possess ivy. Starlings are the most common of all birds. They go hopping about, with their yellow bills, and the air is sometimes almost black with them. War is not waged against the starlings. Like the swallow in France, and the redbreast in England, they are looked upon as almost sacred—sacred, at any rate, from the snare of the fowler. The raven is more common in Shetland. It is easily decoyed by its keen sense of smell: and is destructive to poultry and lambs. At one time the Commissioners of Supply gave three-and-sixpence for every eagle's head, fourpence for a raven, twopence for a crow. This ceased in 1835. Orkney also abounds in red grouse.

The heron may be seen selecting the lee side of the island. The curlew, or whaap, as they call it, is so shy that it is most difficult to shoot. The snipe makes its nest in the mossy banks of lakes and small running streams. There is the purple sandpiper, the landrail, or corncrake, which leaves in October and returns in April: the oystercatcher, lapwing, and golden plover. Wildgeese are rare. The sheldrake is not very common, and is hard to shoot. The beautiful great northern diver is sometimes seen, and also the redthroated diver. The black guillemot, or tystie, is common, and makes its nest in holes under the stones and in fissures of the rocks. The young never leave the nest until perfectly fledged and able to take care of themselves. The puffin is also common, with its curious parrot-bill. Gulls and cormorants abound. The gull, as well as being watchman to the cormorant, is of great service to the seals, who lie for hours upon the rocks. At the approach of danger the gull sounds a note of alarm, will strike the seal on the head with its feet, and when the seal retires into the water, if he appears again in danger, will dart down and splash water into his face. The stormy petrel, or mother carey's chicken, is the smallest of the web-footed tribe.

The flight of birds suggests, also, that with the end of the fair, though not because of it, came the time for my own flight from Orkney. But it was impossible to leave without making an attempt to visit the Island of Hoy: an attempt more often than not frustrated by the weather. Here storms arise without warning, and waves roll along with mighty speed and break over the shores, and forbid any

effort to land. The strong currents of the narrow Pentland Firth sweep down with amazing force, and a very little encouragement on the part of the wind will turn the swell that is never absent into a heavy sea.

Scott has thrown his spell over the islands. To the minds of all who love him he is inseparable from Orkney and Shetland, when they happen to visit either Archipelago. He charmed whatever he touched, and it was changed henceforth and for ever. All the weirdness, the supernatural element, the beauties of description, both of character and nature, as found in the "Pirate": all this lays hold of



The Old Man of Hoy.

the imagination, and will not let it go again, and casts its halo over seas and islands. You see Norna in the dim twilight haunting the precincts of the cathedral, disappearing under dim arches and through secret passages, and reappearing upon the bold summit of every hill and rock. You hear the laughter and the tears of the lovely and loveable daughters of the ancient Udaller; phantom vessels upon the water seem to hold the figure of the bold pirate himself; over moors and downs you perceive the ludicrous figure of Triptolemus Yellowley ambling along in fear and trembling for his craven life.

One of the chief attractions connected with the "Pirate" is the Island of Hoy, with its Dwarfie Stone. It would not be too much to assert that Scott has sent more people here than all the reputation

the stone ever enjoyed apart from his descriptions. Thus I started one morning from Kirkwall for Stromness, in a conveyance very much resembling a dog-cart. As fate would have it, it happened to be the annual fair at Stromness, and it was by the merest chance that I found anything at liberty to take me. The drive of fifteen miles was by no means unpleasant. The road was hard and white, and a capital horse carried us at a good round speed. Now and again a carrion crow, cruel and destructive, would fly across our path, and with a hoarse croak seemed to bid us defiance. The hills were round and about us—the highest in the group of islands: those of Hoy—ahead of us: and with every turn of the road seemed to change in form and outline. On our way we stopped at Maeshowe and the Standing Stones, those monuments of wonder and mystery. Approaching Stromness, all the usual signs of the fair were visible on the outskirts of the town. These were passed rapidly; we entered the narrow, tortuous street, and finally came to an anchor at the hospitable doors of Mrs. Scott's hotel. There is not a more comfortable inn in Orkney than this.

Stromness is now in some senses a more important town than Kirkwall, though when Kirkwall was a flourishing capital Stromness could boast of no existence. Subsequently it struggled into life as the scene of a few small fishermen's cottages on the shore. Most picturesque is the situation of Stromness; far more so than Kirkwall. The town consists of one long, crooked, straggling street. Through openings you may here and there catch a glimpse of the bay, and the land, that, stretching out into the sea like tongues, form a natural harbour: but as a rule you walk through the town and see nothing but the straggling houses on either hand. The beauties of the place can only be seen out on the water or upon the hills.

The aspect of the town is much more commonplace than that of Kirkwall, in spite of the ugliness of the latter. Kirkwall, in a quiet, unconscious manner, imparts to the mind a sense of fitness with its surroundings. It is exactly what might be expected in an out-of-the-world place boasting a cathedral of seven or eight centuries, and a record of eighteen hundred years. Stromness, on the contrary, has newer and more modern buildings, destitute of the smallest beauty. The eye is shocked, when out on the water, by a new-looking chapel or town hall, standing out on the hills, prominent as the eye of an Argus. But most of the houses are built of the ordinary and inevitable grey stone, peculiar to these towns and to many towns in Scotland: houses that, seen for the first time, strike the beholder with an unpleasant chill, dreary and desolate: as the smoke-begrimed houses of London appear to anyone who has lived his life amidst smiling plains and sunny hills: dreariness to which the eye and the imagination never grow accustomed.

But in the beauty of its site, Stromness bears the palm over Kirkwall. The hills behind and around the town; the rising

ground stretching out on either hand, and forming a natural and picturesque harbour; the holms upon the water, here and there raising their rocky heads; the towering hills—towering for Orkney—of the neighbouring Island of Hoy; the transparency and beauty of the water itself: these features, together with the comfortable quarters of Mrs. Scott's inn, combine to make Stromness one of the most pleasant resting places in the Archipelago.

The town owes much of its importance to the fact of its being the nearest point to the mainland of Scotland. Between this and Thurso the little mail steamer takes its daily passage across the Pentland Firth. And woe betide those who are bold enough to cross in rough weather. The crossing is always more or less severe; but there are times, not few and far between, when the little steamer rolls and pitches like a shell upon the ocean, and the passage of less than two hours seems as many days.

Yet it must be taken by those who wish to see the best and boldest rock scenery that Orkney can produce: the high cliffs of Hoy. I had heard a great deal of these rocks; every one spoke of their extreme grandeur and magnificence. I confess to a feeling of disappointment. They possess the misfortune of an exaggerated reputation, which diminishes their effect upon the mind prepared for greater things. A prominent, long, upright column of rock, called the Old Man of Hoy, has become detached in the course of ages from the maincliff, and stands out like a warning to mariners. Years ago it was much higher and grander than it is now; but the soft, crumbling, red stone is yielding to the effects of time. Each year diminishes the stature of the venerable giant.

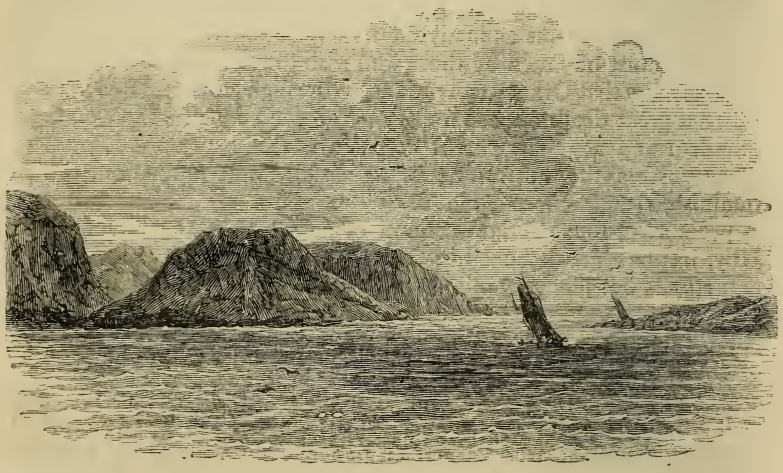
The day I crossed over to Thurso—though it is forestalling to allude to it—the captain of the mail steamer: one of the most attentive commanders afloat, who deserves a better post: pointed out a sheep on one of the highest and almost perpendicular rocks. Years ago a small flock of sheep one certain night in some way got far down this rock. There was no means of getting them back again, or of landing them at the bottom. Grass grew upon the ledge and in the crevices they had reached. Upon this they subsisted, a litttle colony to themselves, in view of, yet separated from the world. As time went on, one after another died, and now there is but one remaining. It was early morning when we passed, and the little animal was lying stretched upon the cliff, fast asleep.

It was at Stromness that Scott met an old woman named Bessie Miller, from whom he is said to have taken his idea of Norna. But there is very little resemblance between the common-place dame of Stromness and the grand, dignified, and imaginative character of Norna. Bessie Miller was a little, shrivelled up, brown old creature, said to have lived a century, wrinkled and haggard. She gained a livelihood by selling fair winds to sailors, and charged sixpence apiece for boiling her kettle. Not one of them would sail, it is said, without pro-

pitiating Bessie with an offering. Perhaps she did not gain it altogether dishonestly; for all she promised was, that if they waited long enough for the wind it would be sure to come.

The day I visited Stromness it was full of the unpleasant noise and bustle of the fair. The inevitable Scotch drovers abounded. So when the slight but necessary duty of lunch was over, I was glad to secure a trusty boatman, leave the town to its noise and its worry, and sail over to Hoy. This can only be done in fine weather, and luckily the day was bright and sunny, and the water calm. Yet storms arise so suddenly that it is possible to leave Stromness in smooth water, and reach Hoy in a sea that will not permit you to land.

The boatman hoisted his sail, and we launched forth upon the

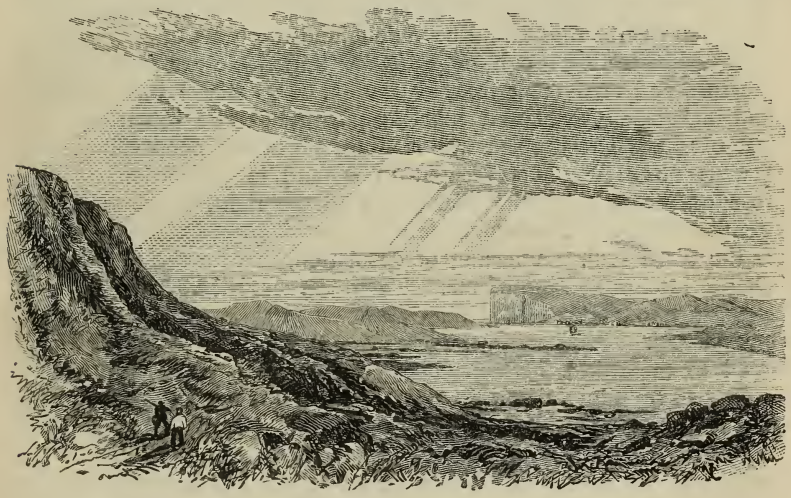


Hoy.

clear water. We steered free of the rocks and gradually got into the more open sea. The run across to Hoy was only two miles, but the currents are so strong and the difficulties of landing so great, that with the slightest contrary wind the two miles will become, in the matter of distance, an unknown quantity. As we receded from the town, the beauty of its position became more marked and striking. Beyond, to the right, rounding Dunnet Head, the passage opened leading to the Pentland Firth and across to Scotland. Before us rose the hills of Hoy, grand and almost majestic, and suggestive of the utmost solitude. The commencement of the fine rock scenery might be noted, but the greater portion of it lay on the opposite side. As we made way a breeze began to spring up, and a swell upon the water. The place the old boatman had singled out for landing could no longer be attempted.

He was an intelligent old man; and yet not old, for he was still in

his prime. He had been a sailor in his day, and gone to many parts of the world. The trip was shortened by some of his past adventures. How they had once left Liverpool in a ship the owners knew to be unseaworthy. How the ship and cargo had been insured beyond their full value, but the lives of the men had not been reckoned in the bargain. How at the end of two days she was making more water than they could possibly pump out. How the captain ill-treated them, and would not put back. How they held a council, took the captain and confined him, and brought the ship home again: and how in the end they were acquitted with flying colours. Then he went out to the gold fields, but met with small luck; and pining for a sight of home made a mistake and returned. He lived now by his boat, and kept a wife and bairn. He and his



Looking out from Hoy, Dunnet Head in the Distance.

mate had a couple of boats between them: they often went out fishing at night, and looked to visitors to employ them by day.

All this time he was keeping his eye upon the landing-place; now tacking, now slackening, now tightening the sheet in answer to the wind; so at last we reached Hoy. We did not land without difficulty. At length the boat was sufficiently high and dry upon the shingle, and was further secured by a rope. As we went up the winding path, a little old woman met us, and asked if we had seen anything of her brother. She was standing knitting, and looking over the water towards Stromness. Her brother had gone to the fair, and she was getting anxious about him. She lived in the solitary little cottage which formed a background to her quaint figure; whilst the blue peat smoke curled up out of the chimney, and lost itself in the pure air.

We went on, and the boatman accompanied me part of the way to the Dwarfie Stone, without which help he said it would be difficult to find the road. It was a tough walk of two miles. Tough indeed. The hardest walk imaginable. It began with an ascent for a considerable distance. The ground was rough, heavy, and uneven: covered with furze, which frequently concealed hidden marshes. At the top of the hill the guide pointed out the direction, and then went back to his boat. The tide was rising, and he dare not leave it to its tender mercies. It was still harder to go down hill than it had been to get up. The uneven ground was so overgrown with furze, and moss, and heather, that all hollows and inequalities were but too well concealed. It was a series of plunges into holes, that shook one from head to foot, and occasionally varied the performance by a headlong tumble to the ground: many wild flowers abounded, plants and herbs that would have delighted the heart of a botanist.

Notwithstanding rough usage, it was impossible not to find great pleasure and enjoyment from this walk. Its aspect was mournful and melancholy, wild and uncultivated, grand and solitary to the last extent. The descent was leading me into a deep valley. As I went down, the hills seemed to expand in proportion. They rose on every side, the Ward Hill to the right, overlooking the Pentland Firth. The highest hill in each island of Orkney is known as the Ward Hill. A feeling of desolation, that for the time has its charm, took possession of me. There was an air of greater size and expanse about this island than about any other part of Orkney I had visited. As I went, the momentary feeling was one of being dead to the world. Deep silence reigned throughout the island, unbroken even by the cry of a bird. Eagles, that once here abounded, did not make the silence and solitude seem more palpable by a flight across the valleys far away into the clouds. No sign of life was anywhere visible; no living creature; not the faintest vestige of a hut or cottage. Not the trace of a human foot. To all intents and purposes this lonely spot might never have been visited by man.

But as I went, the figure of Scott would creep up into the imagination, and haunt the very air. The mind would recur again and again to the *Pirate*, its weird scenes and strange characters. And, coming in sight of the Dwarfie Stone, there upon it distinctly sat the ghost of Norna, holding commune with the mountains, and working her spells. To crown all, the day had changed, suddenly as it does change in these latitudes. Dark, sombre clouds had overshadowed the blue sky; an unpleasant, drizzling mist had begun to fall. This increased tenfold the dreariness of the general aspect, and took not a little from the pleasure of the excursion.

At length I reached the stone, My first thoughts were: "So far for so little!" What had I expected to see? I scarcely know: and if there was a feeling of disappointment it had no business there. A long hollow block of stone, lying in the valley between the hills,

where the ground began to rise. Of course I crept in, probably like every other foolish person who has visited the spot. It was divided into two compartments—one on either side the narrow passage that gave entrance to the interior. Both divisions are small, and admit you only in a recumbent, cramped up position. Yet, says tradition, the stone was once the abode of *a giant and his wife*. Another legend declares that it was once inhabited by a hermit. This might be possible, yet there is little trace of its ever having fulfilled such a destiny. A foot or two in front of the opening is a large stone, said once to have formed the door of the passage, but too heavy to be lifted by human hands. It is certainly a mystery how the Dwarfie Stone came to occupy its present position. A fragment of rock, perhaps, that once rolled down from the mountain, and its place, in course of time grown over with grass and furze, knew it no more. No matter how, it is certainly a mystery. Its hollowness seems to have been the result of thought and plan, not of accident; the work of man, and not of time.

Time, however, is diminishing its attractions. The stone, of soft material, is yielding gradually to the action of the elements. Though the destructive hands of tourists should spare it, these will have no mercy. Portions ready to fall crumbled to the touch, and many fragments were lying about. In the days when Scott saw it, it must have been very much larger than it is now. The hole in the roof, too, for this reason, is much larger than it once was. This is said to have been the chimney that let out the hermit's smoke.

I did what I certainly had never done before—crept out the house by the chimney, sat down to rest upon the stone, and thought of Norna. It seems to have been placed here to suit her plans and purposes. Her words are worth quoting, even though the reader may be familiar with them :—

"But for my misfortune, I was chiefly fond to linger about the Dwarfie Stone, as it is called, a relique of antiquity, which strangers look on with curiosity, and the natives with awe. It is a huge fragment of a rock, which lies in a broken and rude valley, full of stones and precipices, in the recesses of the Ward Hill of Hoy. The inside of the stone has two couches, hewn by no earthly hand, and having a small passage between them. The doorway is now open to the weather; but beside it lies the huge stone, which, adapted to grooves, still visible in the entrance, once had served to open and to close this extraordinary dwelling, which Trolld, a dwarf famous in the Northern Sagas, is said to have framed for his own favourite residence. The lonely shepherd avoids the place, for at sunrise, high noon, or sunset, the misshapen form of the necromantic owner may sometimes still be seen sitting by the Dwarfie Stone. I feared not the apparition, for, Minna, my heart was as bold, and my hand was as innocent, as yours. . . . Often when watching by the Dwarfie Stone, with mine eyes fixed on the Ward Hill which rises above that gloomy valley, I have

distinguished, among the dark rocks, that wonderful carbuncle, which gleams ruddy as a furnace to them who view it from beneath, but has ever become invisible to him whose daring foot has scaled the precipices from which it darts its splendour. My vain and youthful bosom burned to investigate these and an hundred other mysteries, which the Sagas that I perused, or learned from Erlend, rather indicated than explained; and in my daring mood, I called on the lord of the Dwarfie Stone to aid me in attaining knowledge inaccessible to mere mortals."

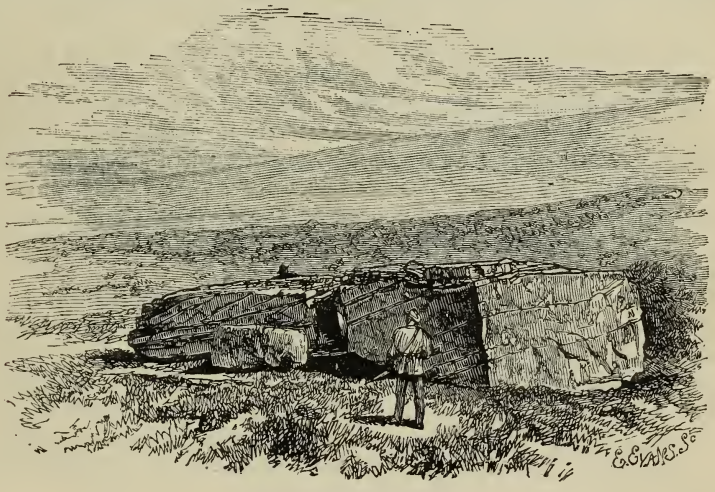
A footnote adds these words: Dr. Wallace gave the following account of this curiosity: "There is in Hoy, lying betwixt two hills, a stone called the Dwarfie Stone, which is one entire rock, thirty-six feet long, eighteen feet broad, nine feet thick, hollowed within by the hands of some mason (for the print of the irons are to be seen on it to this day), with a square hole of about two feet high for the entry, and a stone proportionable standing before it for a door. Within, at one end, is a bed, excellently cut out of the stone, wherein two men may lie together, at their full length; at the other end is a couch, and in the middle, a hearth for a fire, with a hole cut above for the chimney. It is thought to have been the residence of some melancholy hermit."

This description is much exaggerated. It could never have held two men at full length, though one "melancholy hermit" might possibly have screwed himself into the hole. The same cause that is lessening the stone is also increasing the cavity, and it is beyond the power, even now, of anyone save a dwarf, to repose on this soft "couch" at full length. The quotation continues:—

"At the west end of this stone stands an exceeding high mountain of a steep ascent, called the Wart Hill of Hoy, near the top of which, in the months of May, June, and July, about midnight is seen something that shines and sparkles admirably, and which is often seen a great way off. It hath shined more brightly before than it does now; and though many have climbed up the hill, and attempted to search for it, yet they could find nothing."

Thus for Norna's sake the stone is worth visiting, if not for its own. The island itself will amply repay the trouble of getting to it. Yet the walk back from the Dwarfie Stone was more troublesome than the walk there had been. There was more climbing, and, somehow, more stumbling into pitfalls and marshes. I steered my way by means of a small compass, and so reached the shore and the boat in less time, said the boatman, than he had ever known it done. But I was tolerably knocked up, and at the moment promised it should be my first and last visit to the Dwarfie Stone. The old woman was still looking out over the water, knitting and watching for her brother. If we saw him, would we hurry him home? He was all she had, and she felt lonely without him. Well she might, indeed, in that desolate spot.

We put off in what the boatman called dirty-looking weather. The wind was blowing unmistakably, and against us; therefore we had to tack. The sea also had risen, and we shipped much more than was convenient or comfortable. Every now and then a squall came up, and for about five minutes we would be deluged with rain, and tossed about by a wind that was half a gale. Then it would pass over, and leave us in tolerable peace until the next squall came up. It was bitterly cold and wretchedly unpleasant. We were a long time getting back. I was not sorry to find myself at last inside the land, and in the smooth water of the bay. Here we lost the wind. So down went the sail, and we took to the oars, and shot past the holms, up to the landing-stage. Thus ended my trip to Hoy: more pleasantly



The Dwarfie Stone.

than if the wind had been a little higher, and the sea a little rougher, and we had taken a cold plunge into the rapid currents.

And here, reader, we will take our farewell of Orkney. He who goes thither must expect to rough it to some extent; but it has its compensations. A good deal may be said in favour of the islands and the people: more, probably, than I was able to discover in a short and not very toward sojourn: for with the exception of about three days, it rained almost incessantly during my stay in Kirkwall. But that I had taken with me a task that had to be completed, a very few days would have seen me on my way to the more northern of the two archipelagos.

A few words about Shetland, bright, pleasant Shetland, and then farewell to these latitudes.

MARGERY FENNELL.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

TEN o'clock striking by the little Dutch clock in the corner, and George Fennell not yet at home.

Margery Fennell was used to her father's absence of an evening—had been used to it all her life; but whenever ten o'clock struck without bringing him home, she could not help feeling restless and uneasy. She knew then where he was to be found, and in what condition. Either at the Leyburne Arms, at the upper end of the village, or at the Two Travellers, at the lower end, and in a state of maudlin, but good-humoured intoxication.

To-night, as on countless previous occasions, Margery put on her bonnet and shawl, and prepared to set out in search of her father. George never refused to go with his daughter when she found him. "I must bid you all good-night now, lads," he would say, when he caught sight of Margery's white face in the doorway: and he would accompany her home. How hateful such quests were to Margery no one but herself could have told.

George Fennell was a ganger on the neighbouring railway. He had a number of men to work under him, and it was his duty to keep a certain length of line under constant supervision and repair. Although a man of very limited education, he was shrewd and capable at his work, and earned enough wages to have kept himself and his two daughters in humble plenty, and to have put something by for bad times, had it not been for his fatal habit of spending his earnings at the public-house.

Before setting out to-night, Margery took off the fire the savoury little stew which was cooking for her father's supper, and put it to simmer on the hob. Then she blew out the end of candle, and lighted a fresh one, for although Bella was now to all appearance fast asleep, she might wake up before her sister got back, and be frightened at finding herself alone in the dark.

It was from this Bella, this little sister now eight years old, that Margery drew at once the sweetness and the sorrow of her life. The sweetness came to her through the intense, yearning love she bore the motherless child. The sorrow came to her because through her the child's life had been blighted.

One day when Bella was not quite a year old, and a few months before Mrs. Fennell died, the latter sent Margery to fetch some milk, and told her to take the baby with her. Margery went, but the day was frosty, and the roads slippery, and on her way back she fell. She herself was uninjured, but Bella's spine was hurt by the fall, and she

had been a cripple from that day to this: and a cripple, the village doctor averred, she would remain as long as she lived. She could walk, but only with the aid of crutches, and a few steps at a time. She loved best to lie in the big old-fashioned clothes-basket, that had been fitted up for her as a movable bed—out under the lilac bush on sunny days, and in the warmest nook of the hearth when the weather was wet or cold. A silent child mostly, with large patient eyes, who would lie for hours together twining and untwining her long thin fingers, thinking her own thoughts, while she watched the shadows flung on wall and ceiling, or the sunbeams slowly slide from brick to brick of the cottage floor. Her dearest delight was to get her sister to read to her of an evening, when the housework was done, and before George Fennell got home; and, thanks to the kindness of several ladies in the village, Margery was kept well supplied with books. Who can tell Margery's anguish of heart, or the daily martyrdom she underwent when she saw what her sister was, and thought of all she might have been but for that unlucky fall! Day and night she blamed herself for not having been more careful, and vowed that while she lived nothing on earth should come between her and her devotion to the crippled child.

Margery gave a last look round, and then stooped to kiss the sleeping child. The touch of her lips, light as it was, sufficed to wake Bella.

"Are you going to look for father?" she asked, when she saw Margery's bonnet and shawl.

Margery nodded. "I shall not be long away," she replied.

"I will keep house till you come back, and the clock shall keep me company," said Bella. "You can't fancy what strange things it says to me sometimes, when we are by ourselves. It says nothing but tick-tack when anybody else is by, but when we are alone every tick-tack changes into a word, and I ask it questions about fairies and giants, and the little men who live inside the hills. And sometimes all at once it calls out gur-r-r-r. That is its way of laughing, and then I laugh too. Oh, I shan't be a bit lonely while you are gone."

Margery kissed the thin, pale face again, and then went swiftly out, and shut the door behind her. She remembered with a pang what Mrs. Mallott, a neighbour, had said more than once: "That child's too old-fashioned for this world." Then she thought of her father, and life felt very bitter.

She paused for a moment to pin her worn shawl more closely round her throat, for the September night was chilly, and then she set out at a swift pace up the straggling village street in the direction of the Leyburne Arms. Most of the villagers, having to rise betimes, were already abed, but here and there a solitary light shone cheerfully, and showed that others than herself were still awake. They were just preparing to close the Leyburne Arms when she reached it. The landlady was standing in the doorway, taking in "a mouthful of

fresh air," as she called it: rather a needful process considering the state of the atmosphere indoors.

"Is father here?" asked Margery, almost out of breath, so quickly had she come.

"Bless your heart, no, dearie. He left here almost an hour ago," said the landlady. "He was a little bit so-so, but knew well enough what he was about."

"Thank you. Good night," said Margery, and away she sped back into the darkness.

"What a fine girl that do get," muttered the landlady. "There's a look in them grey eyes of hers that I never noticed in anybody else's. It's a burning shame that George Fennell don't look more after her and his home." She never thought, or never cared to remember, how much both of his time and money George Fennell spent under her own roof.

Not finding her father at the Leyburne Arms, Margery's mind jumped at once to the conclusion that he must have walked past his own door and have gone as far as the Two Travellers at the opposite end of the village. More than once before he had done the same thing. Almost at a run, Margery sped back through the village, and taking a foot-path through the churchyard, which cut off a bend of the road, she found herself in a very few minutes at the door of the Two Travellers. With a little sinking of the heart, she saw that all was dark and silent. Not a light, not a sound anywhere. The inmates were already in bed. Where could her father be?

Margery stood for a moment to think. She could call to mind but one other place where there was any likelihood that her father might be found, and that was the lodgings of Black Dick. Her father had been there twice previously, and there was just a possibility that he might be there again to-night. The thought had hardly formed itself in her mind before she was on her way to Black Dick's.

The owner of the above unenviable sobriquet had appeared in Cheverton one day, coming from nobody knew where, and, seeking out George Fennell, had demanded rather than asked for work. He knew nothing of railway work, he said, but he had been in Australia, and he could handle a spade and pick as well as most men. George Fennell took to the man and found him work. That was six months ago. "He's a rare scholar," said George, "and a chap that's seen better days." He gave George an occasional cake of strong tobacco, and thereby kept in his good graces. Where he got the tobacco from he never condescended to explain, but George firmly believed it to have been smuggled, and enjoyed it all the more on that account. If there was one person in the world that Margery Fennell disliked more than another, that person was Black Dick. Whenever they met, and it was only by accident when they did, for Margery would go a mile out of her way rather than run the slightest risk of

encountering him, there came a look into his fierce black eyes that made her heart shrink within her. Nothing but the strong necessity there was upon her of finding her father would have taken her near Black Dick's cottage to-night.

Dick lodged in a lonely little cottage up a side lane that opened out of the main street. The cottage belonged to a deaf old woman of the name of Moore—a widow. Mrs. Moore and her cottage were well known to Margery, who, as a child, had stayed there once for a month when her mother had been called away to nurse a dying sister.

As Margery turned out of the village street into the lane she slackened her pace and went more cautiously. But not a soul did she meet. When she came in sight of the cottage, it looked as dark and silent as the Two Travellers had looked, but Margery knew that Black Dick's room was at the back of the house, and that she should have to go round through the little paddock before she could make sure that all was dark on that side. She was on the point of turning off the foot-path and crossing the stile when she caught sight of some unfamiliar object between herself and the cottage. Venturing forward, step by step, she made out in a little while that the object in question was neither more nor less than a light country trap with a horse between the shafts. It was evident that there was company at the cottage to-night, and no doubt her father was there among the rest.

Retracing her steps a little way, she crossed the stile, and took the foot-path through the paddock, which brought her to a little wicket that opened into the orchard at the back of the cottage. Yes—there was a light shining through the chinks of the shutters of Black Dick's room. Step by step she drew nearer, but she trod very cautiously now. Not for the world would she have Black Dick know she was there. All that she could do was to wait patiently till her father should leave the cottage, then catch him up when he had gone a little way, and conduct him safely home.

When as near the cottage as she deemed it safe to venture, Margery took her stand in the deep shade of an apple tree, and made up her mind to wait there. But suddenly a sound of voices from the inside of the cottage fell on her ears. This struck her with a little surprise, because the voices did not sound like those of men who had grown noisy over their cups, but rather like the voices of men in deep and earnest conversation. Quitting her hiding place, and stepping lightly through the thick grass, she slowly drew nearer to the cottage, but ready to fly at the slightest indication that the party was about to break up. Then she saw how it came about that she had heard the voices so plainly. Although the shutters had been closed inside the room, the sash of the window, which had doubtless been pushed up on account of the warm afternoon, had not been drawn down again. The shutters were old and warped. The

light escaped through them here and there, and through them came the sound of voices that Margery had heard.

Perchance, if she durst venture close to the window, she might be able to satisfy herself whether her father were in the room or not. Anxiety and curiosity emboldened her. With her heart all a-flutter, but with no more noise than a mouse might have made, she crept inch by inch nearer the window. She reached it at last. Then she was obliged to pause and hush her breathing before she durst venture to look or listen.

Half a minute later, with her hand pressed to her bosom, she was peering through the crevice in the shutters, all her senses preternaturally on the alert. What she saw seemed to her, and in such a place as that, a strange sight indeed. Round a common deal table sat four men in close and earnest conversation. Three of them were strangers to her: the fourth was Black Dick. On the table were a lighted candle and a bottle of spirits, with glasses and a jug of water. Nowhere could Margery see her father. She looked and listened, but her interest in the scene was gone, and what they were talking about evidently was no business of hers. But suddenly one of the men took a pistol out of his pocket, and began to examine it, as if to make sure that it was in proper order. It was a pistol with several barrels, such as she had never seen before; and then she saw that there were others like it on a side-table. Then a name spoken by Black Dick struck on her ear—a name with which she was familiar —that of James Clinch, the signalman at Ottergate Junction.

"I tell you again," said Dick, emphasising his words with a blow of his fist on the table, "that the train never passes the junction before thirty-five after eleven. I've timed her myself every night for a week. Two of us can manage Clinch. The other two must keep out of sight till they are wanted."

Then the other men joined in, and the talk grew more animated. Margery listened as she had never listened before. No thought, now, of running away. Even her anxiety about her father was forgotten for a little while. For full ten minutes she stood there with her ear close to the shutter. Then she had heard enough—enough to daze her, to confound her, to make her ask herself in blank despair what it was that she ought to do. Suddenly the meeting broke up, and almost before Margery knew what had happened, the door was opened and the four men came out. It was too late to run back to the shelter of the apple tree. Fortunately, within a few feet of the window there was a large butt placed to catch the rain-water. Margery slipped round to the other side of this, and, drawing the skirt of her black dress over her head, she crouched between the butt and the wall, and waited in mortal dread for what might happen next.

The men stood talking for a minute or two at the door, but their voices now were more subdued, as if they were afraid of being over-

heard by any chance passer-by. Then Black Dick came round the corner of the house and pulled down the window sash. Poor Margery, in her hiding-place, felt as if her heart grew white with terror while he was so close to her. But he went back without suspecting anything, and presently all four men got into the trap and drove quickly away. Then Margery stood up and put down the skirt of her dress, and listened to the noise of the retreating wheels. Yes—it was as she thought. On reaching the end of the lane they had turned to the right and taken the road that led to Ottergate Junction. What ought she to do?—what, indeed, could she do? Even if she were to run across the fields with all her speed, the distance to Ottergate was a good two miles, and the men would be there long before her, and thus render it impossible for her to warn James Clinch in time. Poor James! She liked his pleasant face and cheery laugh. She sometimes wondered why he so often went round by her father's cottage on his long walk to and from his signal-box, when his nearest way was through Noman's Lane. If she could but have warned him! Even while this thought was in her mind, she set off running in the direction of home. If only her father had got back, she would tell him what she had heard. Surely the news would be enough to sober him; and then he would decide what ought to be done. The dear, familiar light at last! She opened the door softly, and went in. Her heart sank within her. There were no signs of George Fennell. Everything was as she had left it, except that her sister was asleep, and that the fire had burnt itself down to a few glowing ashes. What could have befallen her father? Could he have gone round and called up his men, as he had done one midnight not long ago, when under the influence of drink, vowing that it was six o'clock, and time to go to work? But she had hardly time to think of her father under the sense of this other responsibility, which weighed upon her with tenfold force, now that she recognised how utterly alone she was. As she hurried through the village this last time not a single light was to be seen. Everybody was in bed. Somewhere, no doubt, she might have found Ragg, the constable—the only constable of which Cheverton could boast—but he was partially deaf, and infirm with rheumatism, and while she was finding him and telling her tale the precious moments would slip away, and the possibility of doing anything would be lost for ever. If anything was to be done, it must be done at once. The mail would reach Ottergate Junction at eleven thirty-five, and even while Margery was standing there with despairing heart and dizzy brain, the little Dutch clock struck eleven. What, oh, what could she do? she asked herself with a little sob: she, an ignorant, helpless, country girl.

Suddenly, as though it were a flash of inspiration, a thought came into her brain that almost stunned her for a moment. "If I could but do it!" she said aloud. She pressed her fingers to her eyes for half a minute, so as to think out more clearly the scheme that had

been suddenly revealed to her. Then she hesitated no longer. She would try it: she could but fail.

The first thing she did was to tie the ends of her shawl in a knot at the back of her waist, so as to leave greater freedom of movement for her arms. Then she took her father's lamp—the one he used on the line when out at night, and carefully trimmed and lighted it as she had done a hundred times before. Then she took down from its nail a small rush basket in which her father used sometimes to carry his breakfast or dinner. Into this she put six fog signals, taking them out of the box behind the pantry door where a stock of them was always kept in case of need. For it was part of George Fennell's duty during the foggy nights of autumn and winter, when the ordinary signals could not be seen, to summon certain of the platelayers who worked under him, and having given each of them a supply of fog signals, to station them at various points of the line, in order that the trains, both up and down, might be warned in time that they were approaching the junction: and Margery herself had more than once helped to fix the signals when her father happened to be short of men.

She was now ready to set out. A last look at her sleeping sister before she issued into the darkness, then shutting the door softly behind her, away she sped as if for dear life. The object she had in view was to stop the mail train before it could reach Ottergate Junction. In order to do this she must, first of all, get on to the line of railway, which, at its nearest point, was quite three-quarters of a mile from George Fennell's cottage. Margery had the advantage of knowing every inch of the way, and she sped fleetly along, although somewhat impeded by the lamp and the basket, crossing the dark and lonely uplands without any fear at her heart, save that of the being too late to accomplish what she had set herself to do. A quarter past eleven chimed from Squire Grayson's stable clock as she passed the last house between herself and the railway. If only the train were five minutes late to-night, as it sometimes was, then all would be well.

Cheverton in those days was not thought of sufficient importance to have a railway station to itself. The nearest station was at Bickmore, a town of some importance, five miles away. But between Bickmore and Cheverton, about three miles from the former and two miles from the latter, was Ottergate Junction, at which point the line divided itself into two, the main branch keeping on for Bickmore and other places further north, while a shorter branch to the left gave access to several important collieries and a few villages chiefly inhabited by miners. It was necessary to have a man on duty at the Junction by night as well as day, seeing that three or four long mineral trains had to be despatched during the dark hours on their journey southward. The line to Bickmore was merely a branch from a great trunk line some

twenty miles away. Consequently the train which Margery hoped to intercept was only an offshoot of the London mail, bringing with it the letter-bags for a few remote inland towns and such far-between passengers as business or pleasure induced to travel by night.

At length the last field was crossed, the last hedge scrambled through, and Margery Fennell found herself on the railway. Her first act was to kneel and place her ear close to the rail. She knew that by doing so the noise made by an approaching train could be heard sooner than in any other way.

As yet Margery heard nothing. As nearly as she could calculate, she was a little more than a mile south of Ottergate. She must get still farther away if possible, so as to give the train time to pull up before running too close to the Junction. First seeing that her lamp was all right, and turning on the red slide, she started at a quick pace along the narrow trodden path between the up and down lines, known technically as "the six foot." When she had gone about fifty yards she halted, and opening her basket, took out of it one of the fog signals. This, stooping on one knee, she proceeded to fix on one of the rails, by turning down and bending under it the two flanges provided for that purpose. Then, having run twenty yards farther, she proceeded to fix another signal, and twenty yards farther another. By this time the noise of the oncoming train was clearly audible. When she had fixed a fourth signal she knew that it was necessary to hurry back. Leaving her basket with the remaining signals, but holding fast to her lamp, she ran fleetly along the "six foot" till she reached a point about a hundred yards nearer the Junction than the first signal she had put down. Then she turned and waited. By this time the pulsations of the train were becoming louder with every moment. Margery's heart seemed to pulsate in unison. Presently the train came swinging round a curve some half mile away, and next instant the lamp in front of the engine was plainly visible from where Margery was standing. Another moment and she heard a faint report as the engine passed over the farthest signal which she had laid down, then another and another, each louder than the previous one. Before this, Margery, standing full in the pathway of the train, was waving her red light frantically. But already the fog signals—fog signals on a clear night—had warned both driver and guard that something must be amiss. Then came three short quick whistles from the engine and all the brakes were at once put on. Margery's red lamp had not been unobserved. She left herself with barely time to stand clear of the line, when the train came crashing past her. Thirty yards farther on it was brought to a dead stop. Before Margery could reach the train, the driver and guard were coming back to meet her, and sundry anxious heads were protruded through the carriage windows. In a few broken sentences Margery told her tale.

Four men armed with pistols had gone to the signal box at Ottergate Junction. Their object was to seize on the signalman, James Clinch, and take possession of his box for the time being. When the mail was nearly due, they intended to turn on the danger signal instead of showing the ordinary white light, and so bring the train to a stand close to where they were waiting for it. This done, they, being armed and knowing there were seldom many passengers in it, intended to rob the train. They had ascertained that some great treasure was to be conveyed by this particular train, and that treasure they were determined at all risks to make their own. Margery, knowing this, had ventured of her own accord to stop the train, and hoped she was right in doing so.

By this time the group had been swelled by three or four passengers. "Rum tale, Bill," said the driver, dubiously, to the guard. "What treasure have we aboard to-night more than any other night?"

"Don't know," answered the guard, "unless it be this young woman's love letters, or, maybe, her sweetheart come home from foreign parts."

"I can answer the question," said a grave voice from among the small group of passengers. "I and my partner are taking down to O—— Castle a large and very valuable box of jewellery. I think it quite possible that this young woman's story may be true, and I can only imagine that, by some unaccountable means, certain dishonest individuals, having heard of our journey and its object, have hit upon this bold scheme for getting possession of the jewels."

There was silence for a few moments; then the guard, addressing the last speaker, said: "Supposing the tale to be true, what do you think of doing, sir, to keep these rogues from getting hold of your property?"

"I hardly know what to do," replied the jeweller. "Perhaps the best plan would be for me and my partner to leave the train here and take our property with us. We could make our way to the nearest village in which there's a tavern, and, having knocked the people up, find shelter there till morning."

"Gentlemen," said the guard, "maybe you won't mind listening to a word from me. We've got Her Majesty's mails aboard the train, and we're bound to go through with them, if it's possible for man to do so. What I propose is this—that we all go back to our posts as if nothing was the matter, and proceed on our journey, and that when we get in sight of Ottergate signals, if we find them dead against us, as no doubt we shall do if this young woman's story is true, instead of coming to a stand, as we should otherwise have done, my friend Bill, the driver, shall put on all steam and run slick past the signal-box at the rate of sixty miles an hour. Let them fire at us if they like; they'll be clever shots if they hit us. Three minutes later we shall reach Bickmore, where we can rouse the police and put 'em on the track of these scamps?"

After a brief consultation all the passengers, including Mr. Howson, agreed to go forward with the train. Mr. Howson would have Margery in the same carriage with himself and his partner. Now that her share in the drama was at an end, all her anxious fears respecting her father came back with redoubled force. Her one wish was to get back home as soon as possible.

The guard's programme was carried out to the letter. The moment the distance-signal came in view, it was seen to be dead against them. Keeping on their course as though they had not seen it, a minute more brought into view the tall semaphore lamp, that shone, like a red, baleful eye, full of warning and menace, high above the signalman's box at Ottergate Junction. "Whip her up," said the guard, who had taken his place on the engine beside his friend. Accordingly Bill did "whip her up." Steam was put on, and they shot past the box at the rate of more than a mile a minute. A momentary glimpse was had of three or four dark figures crowded into the box, and then the darkness swallowed them up. Three minutes later the train drew up at Bickmore Station.

The would-be thieves had decamped long before the police could reach the Junction, but James Clinch was found there, bound hand and foot, but otherwise uninjured. Black Dick and his friends, although they got clear away for the time being, were subsequently implicated in some other affairs in which they were not so fortunate, and met with the reward due to their manifold merits. Black Dick was discovered to be an old offender who had chosen Cheverton as an out-of-the-way spot to lie by in for a little while till the heat of pursuit in another part of the country should have had time to grow cold.

George Fennell, coming to his senses about three o'clock in the morning, found himself, greatly to his surprise, lying under a hedge within a quarter of a mile of his own door. He had taken off his boots and his hat, likewise his coat, which he had folded up and used as a pillow. Then he had lain quietly down and gone to sleep. What had been his idea in so doing he never knew. The result of his freak was a sharp attack of rheumatic fever which laid him by the heels for three months, and left him ever after a sober and a wiser man.

Mr. Howson and his partner were rich men, and both of them were anxious to show their gratitude for the strange service done them by Margery Fennell. But there was nothing they could do for her, Margery said. They did, however, pay the doctor's bill for her father's long illness, and saw that he wanted for nothing during that anxious time. Mr. Howson offered to have Margery educated, with a view to improving her position in after life, but Margery said that her place was by her father's side, and that nothing should induce her to leave him. "I wish I could show my gratitude in some substantial way," said Mr. Howson to her one day. "Is there nothing I can do?"

Yes," said Margery, "there is one thing you can do," and never till that moment had the thought struck her. "My sister—let her be seen by some of the great London doctors. Oh! sir, if they could but cure her—if they could but make her poor back straight and strong, I should be the happiest girl in England."

Several years have gone by since the above words were spoken. Margery is the happy wife of James Clinch, and James himself is the station-master at Bickmore. But you would never believe that that tall and elegant-looking young lady had ever been the poor decrepit child who used to lie coiled up in an old clothes-basket and talk to the clock in the corner. Mrs. Howson, who has no children of her own, has adopted and educated her. The dreamy, fanciful child has found an outlet for her dreams and fancies in music. Already her playing is pronounced to be full of genius. People who ought to know say that she will one day develop into a great artist.

LOVE'S CALENDAR.

A young year's freshness in the air,
A spring-tide colour to the wood ;
The flowers in spring-time most are fair,
And life in spring-time most is good—
For why ?—I will not let you hear
Until the summer is a-near.

A summer all of burning lights
With crimson roses, passion-red,
And moonlight for the hot white nights,
And jasmine flowers, sweet, dew-fed.
Why has each rose a double scent ?
You may divine when it is spent.

Autumn with shining yellow sheaves,
And garnered fruit ; and half regret
To watch the dreary falling leaves
And leaden skies above them set ;
And why e'en autumn can seem dear
Perchance you'll guess, when winter's here.

Winter, in wide snow-covered plains,
And drifting sleet, and piercing wind,
That chills the blood within our veins,
But our warm hearts can never find—
Ah, little love, you guess, I know,
What warms our hearts in spite of snow.

E. NESBIT.

ONLY TOO TRUE.

IT was one of Mark's cloudy days. That was what he called them when he felt "out of order" and could not work. He had shut himself up in his studio and would not let me enter it. I felt sad and heavy of heart—perhaps because no one needed my presence—and taking the needlework, from which it seemed my fingers were never to be free, I went out and sat down under the shade of the sweetbriar hedge, in sight of our neighbour, Mr. Raymond's, orchard, whose wealth of snowy bloom made all the air redolent with delicious scent.

It was a heavenly day, so fair, so pure, so peaceful. Although but May, and all things wearing the calm beauty of that early time, the day seemed intensified in its loveliness by that soft, rich tint of the skies, and dreamy haziness of atmosphere more peculiar to an Indian summer. In the first moment of my enjoyment of its beauty there came a mingling of disappointment that Marcus had shut himself in from so much glory; that there was no hand to clasp, no eloquent eye to meet, no voice to join with mine in the cry which rose involuntarily from my heart, "Blessed be God for all His goodness!" Without these tastes of paradise—which surely such a day, such skies, bring—some of us anxious ones, almost weary of life's battle, might never have courage to fight on.

Around me waved a growth of tender grass; above, the bees hummed drowsily at their harvest among the blossoms, whose delicate petals ever and anon came showering down like a storm of snowflakes; through the air the song of wren and robin carolled in melody. Far away, through an opening in the trees, I caught glimpses of Arcadian hills with their contented flocks and herds feeding quietly or reposing peacefully in the soft sunshine, which fell like a veil of golden mist over all.

Poor Mark! How all our thoughts turn upon the hinge of that secret joy or sorrow which lies concealed within us! I loved Mark now as well as in the days that I wedded him, but I did not honour him as I did then. Alas, that I should have grown to say it!—to find out how unstable he was.

Who so noble as Marcus Kerrison? who so stable, energetic, persevering as he—or as he seemed—when he came a-courting at my father's little rustic vicarage! "You won't object to me because I am in a shipping house, will you, sir?" he said to my father in his ingenuous way. "I gain five hundred a-year now, and I daresay I shall be a partner before long." And my father shook him by the hand and said he *honoured* men who were in business, and led useful lives.

So we married. And in less than a year Mark had thrown up his good post, and—taken to painting! Four years had rolled by since then; and Mark was twenty-nine years of age and I six-and-twenty. The two little ones, frail as those blossoms falling in the orchard, had been taken from us early, one after the other. Perhaps it was as well. Nevertheless my tears still fell fast for them.

Mark was one of those unfortunate beings who, possessing the soul of a true artist, are yet denied the power which makes an artist successful. He thought he was a genius. He thought that if he painted pictures, he should become rich and famous. When his mind became unsettled, he grew to hate the routine of the office, the plodding industry of his daily life. So he threw it all up one unlucky day, and set up a studio.

Mark worshipped the beautiful in nature and art, and his brain was ever teeming with grand and glorious conceptions; but when he sought to give them life, and form, and colouring, he so failed that often the object of his labour for weeks, perhaps months, was destroyed in a desperate moment of shame, mortification, and self-derision. His easel rarely held a finished picture, though it was never empty of one in some stage of advancement, exquisite in design but imperfect in execution. His table was strewn with sketches, beautiful and full of promise, but, like the pictures, incomplete. He had even made some attempts at statuary, but in this also he failed to shadow forth the visions of glory that shone in his soul.

Still Mark had a good, noble, generous heart, if he had not been led away by this ignis-fatuus—this idea that he was made to be great and famous! Meanwhile we must live: and our house had been given up, and its contents sold piecemeal, as we wanted money. "Never mind, Helen," he would say; "I shall have bags of gold some time." We lived now in a tiny cottage near to Henry Raymond's, who was the second partner in the shipping house.

It was wearing towards the close of that blessed afternoon in May, when I rose to go home, strengthened and comforted by my sweet communion with God, and rejoicing in the fresh manifestations I had witnessed of His infinite goodness and greatness. I saw nothing of Mark when I entered: he was still in his room. I set about preparing our evening meal—a labour quickly accomplished, for there was little to prepare. Tea and bread-and-butter do not take long — but I made a potato salad for Mark. How poor we had got to be! Mark had no income now but his exuberant, voiceless fancies; no prospects but the ruin of magnificent dreams; and these were airy things to live upon. Putting the vase of flowers upon the table as Mark loved to see them, I went up to call him.

He was seated before an unfinished painting of that scene in the temple, described by St. John, where the woman charged with sin is brought before the Master for judgment and condemnation. The drooping head, and penitent, deprecating attitude of the Magdalen,

and the frightened, baffled face of her last accuser retreating slowly from the temple, were perfect in themselves, but the figure of Jesus, lifting himself up to inquire of the woman for those who had arraigned her, was faintly delineated, and the artist's inspiration seemed to have failed when most needed. I often thought it a pity Mark chose these ambitious subjects: he might have succeeded better in simple ones. But it made him cross to say so.

"Shall you be *able* to do this, Mark?"

"No," he frankly answered. "I cannot pourtray the infinite mercy, tenderness, and compassion of that countenance—but I see it in my mind. It is of no use to drop your lip, Helen."

And so, after another day or two of struggling work—and failure, the picture, doomed to incompleteness, was thrust ignominiously aside, as so many others were thrust; and some fresh canvas appeared upon the easel.

These days—when a fresh painting was begun—were joyful days to Mark. This new subject was yet more ambitious than the other, and doomed, I knew, to earlier failure. It put me out of spirits: the wonder was that he could not see it himself.

There was nothing but bread-and-butter that evening; but Mark heeded it not. His face brightened as he sat opposite the open window, through which the glory of the fading day streamed, and he chatted gaily. I knew by the flush on his face that he had been planning some great, grand achievement, and that he was already reaping, in imagination, the fruits of labour not yet performed.

When the meal was over, I seated myself at the western window, on which the rosy hues of sunset were softly stealing, and took up the embroidery upon which I had been busy all the afternoon. It was a fresh piece—a baby's robe to be elaborately worked. Mark frowned.

"Always preoccupied, always at work!" he said. "I might as well be this little atom creeping upon the hem of your sleeve—see, Helen, how small it is," taking off a small insect. "I might as well be that, for all the heed you take of me and of my hopes."

"Dear Mark! How fanciful you are! Why, I am thinking all the time what a delightful thing it is to have you so near. I can work faster when you talk pleasant things to me."

"Work faster!" he repeated. "As if this world were nothing but a workshop. And how can I talk to you when you never vouchsafe me more than a flying glance, and when I cannot touch your hand but you snatch it hastily away to push that bit of sharp steel through a patch of muslin."

I laughed. "You do not want my hand, Mark. Staid old married people don't care to hold each other's hands as if they were young lovers whispering in the moonlight."

He pulled the cambric from me.

"Don't, Mark," I pleaded. "This is in a hurry."

"What's it for?"

"The christening robe for Mrs. Calthorpe's baby."

Mark started up in a passion. "Helen! How often have I told you I *would not* have you lower yourself to work for people! That upstart, vulgar Mrs. Calthorpe! Why, she's not fit to tie your shoe strings!"

"But she is rich, Mark. She pays liberally."

"I don't like you to do it, Helen. Just as if you were a common seamstress! Make me some fresh wristbands, if you must work."

Mark quite angered me. He often did. A child would have had more sense. And yet in most matters he had plenty of it.

"It is that I don't like my wife to do this, Helen. Surely we can manage without it."

"We must have bread, Mark. We are not ethereal enough yet to live without it."

"Bread! Is the money all gone that Hadley paid me for that little picture?"

"Why yes, Mark. Two-thirds of it went in things you wanted for your painting-room."

"I could not get on without them," reasoned Mark.

"Just so. But, Mark dear, we cannot get on without food—and it seems to me that I must find it."

Mark sat pulling at his whiskers and gazing at me. I knew how much he hated these domestic details. His tone became gentle—his eyes moist.

"When the picture I am contemplating is painted—which I have begun to day—when that gets into the exhibition, and purchased, then I shall repay you for all these sacrifices, Helen."

"You will never get a picture into the exhibition, Mark."

"How discouragingly you speak! It had not used to be so, Helen. Time was when you were interested in my plans, and cheered me on with hopeful and approving words."

"Till I found you were pursuing an ignis-fatuus," I said. "Till I found you were cherishing a vain delusion, listening to a phantom voice in your soul, which was luring you away from all that could make your life a true and useful one. I saw with your eyes then, Mark. I was sanguine as you: I had not learned experience. What have you accomplished in all these later years?"

He did not answer. His face was full of sadness.

"Oh, Mark, believe me! If in my secret heart I could acknowledge that Heaven had bestowed upon you a talent to cultivate, no words that I could speak would be too strong to encourage you, and no sacrifice that I could make, in the cause of your advancement, would be too great. But think of the years—the precious legacy of time—frittered away in idle dreams and useless toils. What have you accomplished? Has any good been gained? Has anyone been benefited by your labours? Have any great and noble thoughts

been disseminated through your devotions to this same art?—upon whose shrine you are daily sacrificing yourself."

Still Mark did not answer. He walked away to the window, and stood gazing out abstractedly at the fast gathering shades of twilight.

"Won't you speak to me, Mark?"

"I have nothing to say."

"Oh, Mark!" I cried, "do not be angry with me! Hear me this once, and I will never allude to the subject again if you cannot be brought to see as I do. You are mistaking a fervent love and a warm appreciation of the grand and the beautiful, for the gift and creative power of genius. Indeed that is the simple truth, Mark. Listen, I entreat you, to the dictates of reason before it be too late."

"What would you call reason?"

"This. Rouse yourself from these delusive dreams. Throw them off. Turn to some manly and useful employment, which will benefit yourself, and make the world better for you and for me."

"What shall I turn to?" he asked, some derision in his tone. "Raymond told me yesterday his head gardener was going to leave: shall I apply for the post?"

"Better that than what you are doing now—frittering your life away uselessly. You must know, you must have learned that you will never do any good at painting. And oh, Mark, dear husband, think of the dread day that must surely come, when you will have to render up an account of your doings on earth!"

No reply. We sat a few minutes in silence. I went on with my work again. Presently Mark came across, kissed my forehead without speaking, and shut himself into his studio.

The days went on. Mark shut himself up more than ever; I tried to do well all I had to do, spite of my dreary heart.

Mark began to look haggard and feverish. There was a wild, restless light in his eye that pained and alarmed me. He was silent and gloomy: I do not think I once saw a smile upon his face. Even at meals he did not speak, and he ate nothing. He was not unkind; rather, sad, gentle. I sewed on, and wept in secret.

At last there came a break in this dreadful monotony. It was towards the close of a beautiful day in June—that sweetest of months. Alas! it had not been sweet to me. I was standing at the open door, plucking the yellow leaves from the honeysuckle which twined about the trelliswork, wondering whether I might venture to see after Mark, for he had not been down since early morning, when I heard his step behind me. Turning, I met his blazing eyes, and felt the clasp of his burning hand, as it took mine.

"Will you come to the studio, Helen?"

He pulled me almost fiercely after him, threw open the door, and drew me in

"See, Helen, I *have* completed a picture. Your bitter words have wrought much good."

But as Mark spoke, he reeled with sudden faintness, and caught at the back of a chair. Steadying himself, he added, half petulantly—"Why are you looking with such a face at me? Look at the picture. I shall never paint another."

So I turned to the picture, not yet dry from the finishing strokes. The centre figure was a wild-eyed, eager-looking youth, stretching out his arms impetuously towards a beautiful phantom. A phantom whose bewildering face rose like an alluring star from a mass of clouds, which rolled even to the feet of the madly pursuing worshipper. At the right, and all unheeded, stood a form less fair and ethereal than the vision in the clouds, but calm, lofty, and dignified, with the implements of industry and labour scattered about her, and her great, earnest eyes gazing honestly and fearlessly into the misty distance. In the background stood another figure—a woman, with more of the mortal about her than distinguished the others, watching the deluded youth, and seeming to reason and to plead with him.

"Is it a true picture, Helen?"

"Yes," I said, drawing a deep breath, "it is a true picture."

"And what of the execution?"

Ah, I doubted *there*. But I praised that. How could I do else, seeing him as he was now?

"You look weary and sick, dear Mark, and you have tasted nothing to-day. Come down now: I have something all ready and waiting for you."

"No," he replied, "I want nothing but rest. My head feels strangely. Only rest. Let me rest!"

He staggered to our little bedroom, and lay down in his clothes. Only at night could I get him to undress, and some tea that I took him up he would not touch. Water, only water, he said: that cost nothing. All night he was tossing feverishly to and fro. In the morning I ran out and got the gardener's boy next door to go for Dr. Pine.

He came at once; he looked grave. Mark was very ill indeed, he said. It was fever of some kind—brain or nervous.

"What's amiss with Mark now?" asked Henry Raymond, catching me as I was washing out the tea-pot. "Pine says he is ill."

"Oh, very ill indeed; very ill! What shall I do, Mr. Raymond, what shall I do?"

"Come, come, Mrs. Kerrison, it won't do for you to break down, you know," he said, kindly. "And see—I have brought Mark in a few strawberries," putting the plate of delicious fruit in my hand. "Perhaps they may tempt him. Pine says he is feverish."

"And oh, as yet I have not been able to get him to touch anything," I sobbed; "he says it costs money. Even the toast-and-water he refused, because it had taken a piece of bread to make it."

"Coming to his senses at last, perhaps," said Henry Raymond in his pleasant manner. "But he must not be let starve, for all that."

"He has been painting a picture for several weeks past; has not, so to say, eaten and slept, only worked. And," I added, betraying the fear that lay on my heart, "I think it has turned his brain."

"Turned his brain?"

And, with that, I told this good friend of ours of what I had spoken that night in May to my husband. How bitterly I reproached myself for it none could know.

"Let me have a look at this picture, Mrs. Kerrison."

He went up on tiptoe to the studio, treading softly. Henry Raymond, who was a bit of a judge, stood examining the painting.

"A grand idea," he said at length. "But, as usual, very imperfectly carried out. This picture would not sell for five pounds."

I sighed: knowing it was only too true. Strawberries in hand, Mr. Raymond went on to the bedroom.

Alas, Mark was past eating strawberries. Tossing and turning on the bed in delirium, the fever had already laid sharp hold of him. It was brain fever: no mistaking that now.

"I'll send our old nurse in at once, my dear; she's worth her weight in gold in illness," said Mr. Raymond kindly as he went away. "And Mrs. Raymond will come in and see you as soon as she can. Please God, we will bring Mark through this."

Oh, it was a terrible illness! My poor husband! For long days and nights the fever held him. Now raving, now prostrate, there he lay. Sometimes he seemed to be wildly fighting with a mysterious, hidden Apollyon, whose fiery darts assailed him and threatened destruction. I thought, we all thought, he would have died in the struggle. And what would have become of him or of me without the Raymonds, and how much they did for us, heaven only knew.

The madness and the sickness passed away. Weak and helpless as a little child, Mark was given back to me. My whole soul went up in thankfulness.

One day when Mark had grown strong enough to sit at the open window, I was at work on a stool by his side; he drew me to him, kissed me tenderly, and told me how pale and thin I had grown.

"But it is all over now, Helen, that old mistake. I am going to be a man."

There was certainly a touch of bitterness in his tone. Was he speaking in reproach? My thoughts flew back to that long-past May night and to what I had said in it.

"Oh, Mark, forgive, forgive me!"

"Forgive you for what, my darling?"

"Don't you know? Don't you mean—what I said that evening?"

"What you said was just what I needed, Helen. I had been indistinctly thinking so myself for some little time before. I was not prepared to acknowledge the truth then, but I felt it in my secret

soul. I had so long cherished the hope of future fame and triumph; I had dreamed such magnificent dreams, had built such glorious castles in the air: to give all up at once was too hard, too hard. But my senses have come to me, as Raymond calls it; the mistake's over, the trouble at an end."

"And—you mean—that you shall not go on painting?" said I, my pulses beating wildly.

"Never again."

"And then ——?"

"And then, you would ask, what am I going to do. How get bread and cheese—when I don't paint and you don't sew? for we will have no more working, Helen. Well, Raymond—how kind he has been!—has told me I may go back to them when I will: at the old salary, too. So, my love, our troubles are over."

Whether I laughed most or cried most I cannot tell. The sun at that moment burst out from behind a cloud in the blue sky: to me it seemed as if those bright beams came direct from our Father in heaven—an earnest of His love.

Some years have gone by since that day, and two little children are playing at my knee. We are well off now, for the firm is Raymond, Raymond, and Kerrison. And that last picture of Mark's hangs up in our dining-room: a memento, Mark says, of a man's folly.

"SORROWFUL, YET REJOICING."

Oh! sleepless nights, waiting on days of pain! Oh, heart, sore rent!
Can these send forth a cry of thankfulness—more than content?
Can the pale cheeks and lips yet wear a smile?—the feverish eye
Shed healing tears of joy, not burning drops of agony?

Does not the Saviour stand beside her bed, and ease each throe?
His presence just as real and comforting as when below,
Here on this earth, He moved, and soothed the smart of anguish sore
In those who touched with trembling faith the hem of robes He wore.

And our dear Master's gracious presence near; His love our own;
How should we fret at earth's hard chastisements—how make our moan
O'er troubles which are "blessings in disguise," ruled by His hand?
His followers calmly face the fiercest storm, if He command.

And she who lies upon her bed of pain is far more blest
Than hundreds walking heedless, midst life's joys, of His behest.—
Those joys, as flow'rs, fade quickly 'neath the touch: hers feed like fire
On all God sends of good or seeming ill, and never shall expire.

EMMA RHODES.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XIII.

ESCAPED.

WHAT a terrible situation it was! The moonlight streaming in upon the haunted room, with all its ghostly associations, and upon Guy Pomeroy standing against the picture: Guy, who had come to interrupt the interview. His guilty wife—guilty, at any rate, of mean duplicity to him—cowered in her terror. Rupert, turning sharply round from the window at her cry, wondered what the matter could be.

The Lord of Pomeroy strode forward, his white features livid in the moonlight. Thrusting his wife out of reach of harm, spurning her with his foot, for in her dismay and fear she sank to the ground of her own accord, he drew a double-barrelled pistol upon his brother. The ball missed him, entering the dark wainscoting: and yet the Lord of Pomeroy had a sure hand in general. Ere he could draw again, Rupert closed with him, and they grappled for the weapon. Mrs. Pomeroy heard the deadly scuffle, as she sped, gasping and moaning, from the chamber, through the rooms of the west wing, and gained the stairs of the north tower. In her haste and terror she fell down them against the door below: and just then she thought she heard the noise of the second barrel, but was not sure.

Up again in a moment. She seized the key which Rupert had left in the door; but whether she turned it, or whether it was previously unlocked, she never knew. Probably the lord had left it unlocked when he entered: though, how he had contrived to

enter, considering that Rupert had locked the door on the inside and left the key in it, was a mystery.

The door, opening into the cloisters, stood ajar. Mrs. Pomeroy flew out, sank down on one of the green benches of the quadrangle, clasped its arm tightly, and hid her face on it—just as we clasp the nearest support for protection on awaking from a terrific dream. She moaned under her breath; not aloud, lest anyone about should hear; she stilled her sobs of remorse and agony: and then she cast stealthy glances up to the window of the haunted room.

Trembling, moaning, cowering; feeling that to die would be a mercy; even the wainscot, which had received the ball, she could envy, and wish it had been her own bosom; Mrs. Pomeroy sat there till the clock went the quarter-past ten. Her ear was on the stretch to listen for her husband's footsteps, descending: at their first distant echo, she would have crept, like a worm, underneath the bench, in her sense of shame. If he saw her there, would he come out and put her to death?

But the probability was that he would stalk straight onwards through the cloisters. And Rupert?—how would he come?

"Can't I go into the lady's room yet?" she heard one of the servants say, who appeared to meet another in the passage. "Getting on for eleven, and it's not put to rights for the night."

"No," replied the voice of Theresa. "The lady said she should try and sleep her headache off, and I was not to go to her room, on any account, unless she rang. The door's fast."

Mrs. Pomeroy shuddered, and held the bench convulsively.

The minutes rolled by, almost killing her with their slow protraction, and the clock chimed the half-hour. In that one half-hour she seemed to have lived the agony of a whole lifetime. Neither had come down; neither Guy nor Rupert: of that she felt certain, for her ears were strung to a strange fineness then. She gazed up at the window; an unbroken gaze now. What was taking place there? Were those two men, meted in height and strength, perhaps in ferocity, struggling on with each other until one or the other should be overcome, struck to death? *Which* would conquer? In this terrible suspense she continued, until the clock struck eleven. A whole hour, and neither had appeared! Were *both* dead? Her heart and throat were working, her ears singing.

She could not bear it longer. It seemed that her brain was giving way. Slowly, cautiously, a step at a time, she stole through the cloisters to the staircase door, put her head up, and listened. There was not the slightest sound. Up still, a stair at a time, and now another, went she; and again she stopped to listen. Nothing —nothing. And so on, through the west wing to the last room in it, silently and creepingly. She paused at the door of the west tower, of the haunted room: little thought she of supernatural visitants now: the bodily ones were filling every crevice of her imagination.

The door was not closed, only pushed to, and the same silence reigned within—a silence that was every moment becoming more awful. She would have given half her life to hear one of Guy's oaths or Rupert's sarcasms. Dead—were they?—and for her?

She pushed the door open, and then shrank back and drew up against the wall, lest the movement should have caused alarm: but neither sound of alarm nor anything else issued forth to indicate that the place was tenanted; so, pulling back the drapery, she peeped in. She had come out of the lighted quadrangle, and her eyes could see, as yet, nothing in the room but darkness; the moon, at that moment, had gone under a cloud. No: still there was no movement, no sound, and she ventured to enter the room. She was stealing towards the window, a vague intention of standing there—whence she could look below and seem less lonely until she should become more accustomed to the darkness—floating through her scarcely sane brain, when she fell over something. Putting out her hand to save herself from quite falling, it touched—either a hand or a face. It seemed like the latter—and it was cold, with the coldness of death.

Her nerves could bear no more: this was the climax. Uttering shriek upon shriek, and tearing along as if the dead man were coming behind her, down she flew again in all the terror of superstition. The noise penetrated to the abbey. The servants came forth, bearing lights; the guests, who had then gone to the quadrangle with their cigars, ran in the same direction—all to meet Mrs. Pomeroy, her face white, her eyes starting. The servants caught her, and she lay, convulsed, in their arms. Mrs. Wylde came up.

All crowded round Mrs. Pomeroy, one universal sense of consternation prevailing. Emotion and fear had brought on something like a fit, attended with hysterical shrieks. Speak, she could not; but she shudderingly pointed, now to the stairs of the north tower, now to the windows of the haunted room in the west one. What she could mean by indicating the north tower no one was able to understand; for, that it should be open, was suspected by none. But the other movement was more readily understood, and the servants called out simultaneously, "She has seen the ghost!"

"Go, go," she gave utterance to at length, "*there*," pointing to the haunted room. "Some one is lying dead."

That her words should be looked upon as the ravings of a not sane brain was natural; nevertheless, old Jerome crept away to his key-closet, and then to the north tower. Had he discovered that his keys were missing? He came back from the staircase with a face as apprehensive as his lady's.

"Who will go with me?" he said, looking first at the gentlemen and then at the men-servants. "If they are at warfare, one man will be powerless to part them."

All were ready to go, none comprehending what they were to go

for, or what there was to do: and they went in a body towards the stairs, bearing several lights. One of the guests, Lord Sones, drew Jerome apart.

"What do you suspect?" he asked.

"I suspect—I suspect there may be a dispute," he slowly said.

"Between whom?"

"Nay, my lord, but I know nothing. Don't detain me."

Jerome took a light from the hands of one of the servants, walked quietly before them, and led the way up through the west wing. At the door of the haunted room he halted, turning round to face those who were following.

"I must go in first alone," said he, his tone one of assured authority. "I am the oldest retainer in the family, in the confidence of the Lords of Pomeroy, and I demand it."

He passed in, and let fall the hangings, no one attempting to dissent; but in less than a minute he held them up and spoke, his voice sounding like a wail.

"Walk in now. Oh, woe! woe!"

Holding their breaths, the crowd pressed in, one upon another. Woe, woe! as Jerome had said: for there lay the Lord of Pomeroy in the arms of death. It was his cold face that his wife had touched.

So, Rupert had mastered! had obtained possession of the pistol in their mortal struggle, and shot his unfortunate brother!—for the bullet was subsequently found in the head. The lower part of the face was also bruised and battered, as if by blows.

It must be remembered that those now gazing on him possessed no clue whatever to the tragedy, its cause, or action; neither could they give the slightest guess as to the perpetrator: Jerome doubtless suspected, but he kept silence. Horror-stricken, bewildered, sick, they began to look about the room for a solution of the mystery, throwing the light of their torches hither and thither. Who had done it?—how and why had it been done? Nothing was to be seen save the ordinary and dilapidated furniture, and the dust on the floor, disturbed as by a scuffle, and the damaged nun's picture resting so still in its frame.

"What's this?" exclaimed one of the guests, snatching up a dark grey cloak, and exhibiting it to their view. "This was not the lord's. Ah, ha! this will lead to a discovery."

"I know that," interrupted a servant. "It is Father Andrew's capuchin. He wears it sometimes when he comes to the abbey on a winter's night."

"Father Andrew's!" echoed the assemblage; and they began to abuse the speaker.

"I could swear to it," doggedly persisted the man: "I know it by those two rents at the tail of the skirt. The father said he got it caught in a gate one windy evening."

Father Andrew, a priest, and an unoffending man, attack the lord!—for of course the words bore that implication. The thing was not likely; it was inexplicable. Jerome, who had sat down on the edge of the velvet settee, lifted his face of misery, and slightly shook his head in dissent. That the motive had nothing to do with robbery was apparent: the lord's signet ring was on his finger, and his valuable gold watch and chain had not been touched. When his pockets came to be examined afterwards, their contents were found safe: keys, pocket-book, purse, and handkerchief with the great crest and supporters, only used by the Lords of Pomeroy—the younger sons used the more simple one. The clothes were much torn, proving how severe had been the scuffle. But Father Andrew! what could have brought *him* in the fray, even as a spectator—or his capuchin? And where had he got to?—and where was the murderer?

The question as to the priest was soon set at rest, for who should walk into the room but the reverend father himself, his form as roundabout, his red face as merry as ever, presenting quite an opposite appearance to all popular notions of a midnight assassin. The terrified women below had sent for him in haste.

"What's to do?" cried he, on the broad grin. "Somebody seen the ghost?"

They made way for him, and threw the light on the floor. Father Andrew's countenance changed. He stepped back awe-struck.

"Who is it?" whispered he. "How was it done?"

"It's the lord; and he appears to have been attacked and murdered," hastily spoke one of the upper servants. "Does your reverence know this?" added the speaker, picking up the cloak.

"That's mine," said the priest.

"How came it here, father?"

A light, as of horror, seemed to break upon him. "I lent that to—to—a friend," he whispered.

"To whom?"

The priest was silent. He did not seem inclined to say. Lord Sones took a step forward. He was not a Roman Catholic.

"Sir," said he to Father Andrew, "it appears to me, as it no doubt appears to those who stand here with me—my fellow guests at this house, and the valued old retainers of my poor friend, lying there—that it is incumbent upon you to speak and say to whom you lent the cloak. A most foul deed has been done: and that cloak is the only clue we possess at present to its apparent perpetrator. You must state freely to whom you lent it."

"Rupert Pomeroy. He came to me yesterday and borrowed it."

There was a pause of dismay; and poor Father Andrew, who had spoken unwillingly in his allegiance to the Pomeroys, and because there was no escaping it, gave vent to a groan of pain.

The public commotion was without parallel. Nothing like unto it had ever stirred up that remote and quiet county. The Lord of Pomeroy had been murdered (so people put it) by his brother Rupert.

The police took the affair into their own hands, turned the servants, as it were, inside out, and collected details at will. Thus, while the death-flag waved over the abbey gateway, and the poor dead lord lay in state in the chapel, according to the Pomeroy forms and customs, a great deal became known of the few days preceding his death, and of the movements of his false and foolish wife. Her secret visits to the old Keep were discovered; and the *second* note written to her by Rupert, asking her to meet him in the west tower, was found. The first note she had torn into small pieces and scattered them to the winds, as may be remembered; pity for her own good name but she had also torn the second. When the police were searching the abbey, to discover, if possible, some clue that might throw light upon the fatal meeting between the brothers, they found this second note, and its contents were made public. The result was not favourable to Mrs. Pomeroy. The bare imprudence and folly of those meetings with Rupert would have been enough to condemn her: and upon such matters as these the worst construction is generally put. Mrs. Pomeroy's own state was pitiable: she neither denied nor admitted anything, but lay in a semi-passive state, her anguish of mind worse than pen can paint. The medical men thought she would have lost her reason.

Rupert had escaped. How, or by what means, none could tell. That he was still concealed somewhere in Abbeyland, perhaps even in the abbey itself, was conjectured by the police, and the search after him was keen. No person whatever, so far as could be learnt, had seen Rupert since the fatal fray. Gaunt testified, and with truth, that he had not returned to the lodge; and the things pertaining to Rupert remained there unclaimed. Bills, headed "Murder," in large letters, were posted about, offering a reward of £200 for the apprehension of Rupert Pomeroy.

As soon as might be after the tidings reached them, Joan Pomeroy arrived at the abbey with her brother-in-law, Henry Capel. Shocked, distressed, horrified, Joan listened to the details of her brother's death, and of the disgrace brought on the house by the woman he had made his wife. Whether innocent of actual crime—as she might be—or whether guilty of it, Alice Pomeroy had as surely been the originating cause of the calamity, had as directly led to it, as anyone can be or do in this world.

In her bitter grief, her anguish, Joan reproached Alice. Not loudly, not severely, but with stern truth. Alice shivered, and answered nothing. Mrs. Wylde would have taken up her daughter's defence, but she began in a lame, shame-faced sort of manner, and Joan swept out of the room. Mrs. Wylde could not bring back to life that unhappy man who had been hurled to death, and died

unshriven. So long as Joan should live, her heart would ache for him, her most ill-fated brother.

A sad funeral; a solemn ceremony: that which attended to his last resting place Guy, Lord of Pomeroy: made doubly sad and solemn by the terrible circumstances of his death. People came to it from far and near, as they had come to that of the old lord; ecclesiastics high in the Catholic church; nobles, friends, relatives, retainers. Leolin Pomeroy crossed the channel and officiated as chief mourner.

Up to the last hour Guy had lain in state in the chapel in his coffin. Many a tear was dropped over him, many a sob suppressed. Pomeroy would not know a better lord. Guy might have been stern and cold of manner, but he was generous of heart. He would have righted wrongs, but never inflicted them; he would have succoured, but not oppressed.

And so, with all this state and ceremony, he was put in the cold chapel vault by the side of his late father: and the people went home, leaving him there. And the death-flag waving over the abbey gateway was exchanged for the hatchment. And Joan, in her superstitious heart, said that this had been the working-out of the prediction. Or, perhaps but its commencement! Who knew?

Jerome quitted the abbey on his return from the funeral, to take up his abode in the Keep. The calamity had sensibly affected this faithful attendant of the Pomeroys. Since its occurrence he had worn a kind of dazed look, and his manner was timorous, just as if he feared his own shadow. His occupation at the abbey was gone, he told Joan, when soliciting permission from her to quit the service and retire to the Keep, and the tears rolled down his cheeks as he said it. Mrs. Pomeroy he declined to serve, and the new lord, George, was not there. For the renegade, Rupert—who was still being hunted for that he might answer at his country's bar for his crime—could not inherit, and George was the Lord of Pomeroy.

"Jerome," Miss Pomeroy took occasion to ask, dropping her voice to the lowest whisper, "can you think where *he* can be?"

But Jerome, instead of answering, gazed at her beseechingly—as if silently imploring her to drop the subject. Joan fancied that he looked a little bewildered.

"I speak of my most unfortunate brother, Rupert, Jerome. He must have made his escape from the abbey that night in the general confusion. Have you any idea where he is?"

"Alas! no," sighed the old man.

"But, Jerome, I cannot help suspecting that you must have been privy to his visits to the west tower."

"Before the holy saints that hear me"—and Jerome crossed himself—"I was not. I declare to you, Miss Joan, that I knew nothing of his having gone there either night. Such a thought, that he would attempt it, never crossed my mind."

Joan wrung her hands. There were moments when the misery that had fallen on their ill-fated house pressed more heavily upon her than she knew how to bear.

For months Mrs. Pomeroy kept her rooms, nursing her remorse and her anguish. One lively terror was constantly upon her—that Rupert would be taken. As spring advanced, and the weather became genial, a sad figure, veiled and draped in crape, might occasionally be seen wandering in the more sheltered parts of the garden, or seated under its gloomiest trees. She now inhabited only a portion of the front pile of the abbey—that lying between the great entrance gates and the south tower—and her household was a small one. The rest of the numerous servants remained, doing nothing; they were the lord's retainers, and awaited his coming home.

George Pomeroy did not appear to be in a hurry to come. When the news of his succession reached him in India, he wrote back appointing an agent, or steward, to act in his place. This was John Gaunt, the gentleman keeper. George Pomeroy endowed him with absolute power and authority: in the abbey and out of it he was to be the unquestioned master. Gaunt proved to be a most courteous and considerate one. Mrs. Pomeroy he treated with the utmost respect, deferring to her in all matters that properly pertained to her. Only once did her wishes clash with his. She suddenly issued orders, some twelve months after her husband's death, for the throwing open, cleansing, and renovating the west wing, and for the barring up of the west tower. Gaunt refused: he said it could not be done. He waited on Mrs. Pomeroy, and told her that he was unable to sanction the order without the consent of the lord. "Write to him for it," said Mrs. Pomeroy, curtly—and Gaunt wrote. The answer was received from India as speedily as mail could bring it. It forbade the west wing to be meddled with in any way: neither that nor the tower was to be touched: and a peremptory command to Gaunt followed, to keep the wing locked up, and not to permit any person to enter it on any pretence whatever.

"The new lord has got all the Pomeroy superstition upon him," quoth the gossips when they heard this. "He won't have things, up in that wing, altered."

The non-return of George Pomeroy vexed his family, Joan especially. Never was such a thing heard of yet as for the Lord of Pomeroy to live away from his own domains. Joan had her own opinion.

"I know why he will not come," she remarked one day to Henry Capel. "George was always chivalrously considerate to other people's feelings. He stays away out of delicacy to the poor wanderer, Rupert."

Mr. Capel could not understand. And said so.

"In the ordinary course of things Rupert would have come in after Guy," she continued. "As it is, he was passed over for George. George feels that; and he will not, in deference to Rupert's feelings, assume his rights as Lord of Pomeroy."

Henry Capel drew in his lips. "Strange reasoning, Joan. One would almost think *you* wished to show deference to that miserable man."

"No. But you don't know George. The more miserable a person is, the more cautious he would be not to tread upon him. He will stay where he is for a year or two, and then come."

Several years passed on uneventfully. Rupert was not found or heard of; George did not return. There were rumours of war in India, he wrote word, and he did not choose at such a time to quit the army. A report had reached Europe some time before that George had married. It was not confirmed; and his own family utterly rejected it. The Lord of Pomeroy was not one to marry privately, without sending proper credentials home: a wife of his could not put her head under a bushel.

At length, when five years, and somewhat more, had elapsed from the time of his accession, Joan grew downright impatient for his return, and wrote him a severe letter about the duty he owed to Pomeroy and the obligation that lay upon him to come home and enter upon his inheritance.

Alas, George Pomeroy never did come home to enter upon it. Before Joan's letter reached the shores of India, war had broken out there, and George fell on the battle-field. Tidings of the sad event arrived, bringing deep sorrow, for all the world had liked George Pomeroy. Never had it been known for one of the lords to die away from his own domains, and the abbey mourned that fact as freely as they mourned him. Once more the death-flag waved over the entrance-gates; masses for the repose of his soul were said in the chapel.

And the youngest of the four sons, Leolin, succeeded as Lord of Pomeroy.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT THE DUCHESS OF ST. IVES'.

It was the height of the London season. The night sky above was studded with its stars, as the starry beauties of this lower hemisphere were pressing into one of the greatest and most exclusive houses of the day. Great in its reference to that iron god, fashion; not greater in its size than many another.

It was the town-house of the Duchess of St. Ives, a wealthy widow, only two-and-forty yet, and beautiful still. She had ruled the world long on her own account, and now she was ruling it in right of

her son. It was the first season he had spent in London since coming of age, and the world was going mad after him. Mothers courted him openly, daughters covertly: for young ladies in those days had not become *fast*, or learnt to enter upon courtship for themselves unblushingly: a grand thing to be Duchess of St. Ives!

A well-appointed carriage dashed into the rank, and struggled its way to the door amidst the rest. The Countess of Essington descended from it with daughters three. The majestic countess, as important in her own eyes, and daring in her own actions, as the Duchess of St. Ives in hers, had brought them all; the Ladies Mabel, Geraldine, and Anna Hetley. Mabel and Geraldine were like their mother, commanding, stately girls, with clearly-cut features, beautiful, but cold as though they had been carved from Parian marble. Anna was different; she had nothing of majesty or of marble about her: a fair, graceful girl, with soft, shy, merry blue eyes that drooped beneath their long lashes when gazed into, a flushed, dimpled, lovely face, and a pretty mouth too much given to laughing, and to displaying unconsciously its set of white pearls.

A moment's respite after the reception, and the countess and her daughters were but so many of the brilliant crowd that thronged the rooms. Lady Anna found herself seated next to a young lady with whom they were on terms of close intimacy.

"Have *you* come to-night, Anna? Three of you! What an idea!"

"There was no help for it," laughed Anna. "This is the ball of balls, you know, and Mabel and Geraldine would not give up their privilege of elders; and mamma did not wish me to remain away, because—because ——"

"There; go on to the rest. I understand."

"'What can be done?' quoth mamma to us this morning at breakfast: 'Geraldine, I wish you would, for once, give up to Anna.' 'Oh dear no,' returned Geraldine; 'it's not to be thought of.' 'Then I shall take you all,' said mamma. '*That's* not to be thought of,' put in Mabel; 'there never was such a thing heard of.' 'I may do what others would not dare,' concluded mamma, in her lofty way."

"And that is how you are here?"

"I don't know whether she would really have brought me in spite of Mabel; who is very positive, you know, in her opinions—and mamma gives in to her greatly. Listen yet. The duke called, and began talking to me about to-night, wanting to make me promise—oh, I don't know what all—to give him two dances to everybody else's one, and that sort of nonsense. 'I am infinitely obliged to your grace,' I said, making him a demure curtsey, 'but I am not coming.' You should have witnessed his face. 'Not coming!' cried he, when he could find words. 'Certainly not. I am the youngest, and my sisters have precedence over poor me: the inconvenience, you see, of having three demoiselles in a family.' Off

went the duke to mamma, and said——I did not listen, but the result is, that I am here."

The young lady-listener sat, playing with her fan. "Anna, there need not be any more heart-burnings after the duke: we may all resign him at once with a good grace, for we shall have to do it. You are in luck."

"Luck at what?" cried Anna, quickly.

"To have gained him. You might be Duchess of St. Ives to-morrow."

"Might I? Nothing of the sort. I'll turn him over to you: or to Mabel."

"You know you might be: and you know you will. Here he comes, true to his allegiance. And now it is good-bye to you for the rest of the evening, I suppose."

Lady Anna glanced towards the Duke of St. Ives. He was threading his way to her amidst difficulties, for he was set upon and detained on all sides by the gentlewomen who were angling for him with their subtle lines. "It will take him twenty minutes to get here," laughed Anna.

"Oh, Anna, what a lovely bouquet!" suddenly exclaimed the young lady, observing the flowers for the first time. "Who supplied it?"

"How can I tell?" returned Anna, with downcast eyes and conscious cheek. "It was left for me just before we came out."

"He has taste in flowers, at any rate, if these were arranged under his auspices."

"Who has taste?"

"Who! You can afford this pretty affectation of unconsciousness, now you are sure of him. St. Ives."

"But I am not sure of him," again laughed Anna. "And I am not sure—indeed, I don't think—that he sent the bouquet. Another came, less beautiful: 'Oh, that charming one is the duke's,' cried mamma, pointing to this; 'use that one, Anna:" and I obeyed, saying nothing, but I fancied the other was his."

"The duke would send but the one?"

"Of course not."

"Who sent the other?"

"Can I tell, I say?" returned Lady Anna. "Is not all the world dying to send bouquets to me?" she added, with pretty sauciness. Anna Hetley was in unusual spirits to-night.

The Duke of St. Ives reached her at length, and took her away with him. He was tall; too tall, and too slender; altogether very much like a maypole, with a fair complexion, mild eyes, and a meek, inoffensive face. At Eton he was called "Milky," and he had never lost the sobriquet. "St. Ives is a milksop still, he has no devil in him," sneered sometimes the fast young men, his friends, who had rather too much of it in them.

The quadrille was walked over, a waltz was got through. Other dances with other partners came, in their turn; and just as Anna was enjoying a moment's respite in a sheltered corner, another gentleman came up to her, who had but then entered. Above the middle height, but not remarkably tall, he was yet a distinguished-looking man, his luxuriant hair of a dark brown shade, his grey eyes clear, and his features very fine.

"Anna," he whispered, in a low, musical voice, whose tones spoke love, if ever love was spoken—"Anna!"

She started and blushed vividly: she had not seen him advancing. "Oh, Leolin!"

"Did you think I was lost?"

"I thought you were never coming. Why are you so late?"

"And I am only here now to tell you I cannot come—if that is not Irish. Stanton—you know Stanton?"

"Yes: a little."

"Well, poor fellow, he has met with an accident to-night, through the bursting of a gun. I was starting to come here when they sent for me: he is in great pain, in shocking spirits, and cannot bear for me to leave him. I told him he must give me half an hour, and I came here to tell you."

"I am so sorry. How——Here comes St. Ives again," she broke off, in a hurried whisper. "Say I am engaged to you, Leolin."

The Duke of St. Ives received his answer, and the other looked at his watch. "I must stay for this one waltz, Anna: the temptation is not to be resisted."

She put her arm within his, and his eyes happened to fall upon the flowers. "They are nicely arranged, Anna, are they not?"

"I knew they came from you," she softly breathed. "This bouquet and another were left. Mamma jumped to the conclusion that the more beautiful one must be from the duke, and ordered me to use it. His lies neglected on the table at home."

"Anna, I shall begin to fear that the duke is dangerous," he said, as he held her somewhat closer than he need have done, in the whirling waltz.

She smiled and half shook her head, but her shy and pretty eyes were bent to the ground; otherwise he might have seen how full they were of love.

"And now I must not linger another moment," he exclaimed, when the dance was over. "Poor Stanton!"

"Leolin, I don't believe you have spoken a single word to anybody in the room!"

"I do not think I have: St. Ives excepted. I looked for his mother when I came in, and could not see her."

"I was very nearly not coming, Leolin. We are three of us, you know—and had Lucy not married she would have made a fourth. The duke called to-day and talked to mamma, and *would have* me come."

"You should contrive to give the duke a hint. Good-night, my dearest."

He left her sitting where she was and quitted the room. Anna's eyes followed him. She saw him step aside to greet the duchess, she saw him turn when at the door to give herself a last look. With his departure, the evening's happiness had gone out for her.

"I never heard of anything like it!" uttered Lady Anna Hetley, as she stood before her mother the next morning, with crimsoned cheeks. "How stupid he must be!"

"Stupid?" echoed the countess.

"*Was* such a thing ever heard of, mamma? As if he could not have waited till a proper time and season! And what in the world took papa there last night? I don't think he has troubled a ball for years."

"Is anything the matter with Anna?" exclaimed Lady Geraldine, who had entered while her sister was speaking.

"A piece of good fortune is the matter with her," returned the countess. "St. Ives spoke to your papa last night about her."

"Made her an offer? asked for her?" breathlessly returned Geraldine.

"Yes, he did. I knew it was coming to it."

"And what is she grumbling at?"

"We go by the rules of contrary in this land," cried the countess, shrugging her shoulders; "the more happiness is rained upon us, the more we grumble. Grumbling is indigenous to England."

"But think of the stupid way in which he went to work," retorted Anna; "never to say a syllable to me, never to give me a hint of what he was about to do, but to go blundering off-hand to papa! And to speak to him in his own ball-room, at his own house! I wonder papa listened to him."

"What did it signify where he spoke to him?"

"It signifies this—that he ought to have told me first, and not have broken it to papa without my knowledge."

"You must have seen what it was coming to ——"

"What *is* the matter?"

The interruption came from Lady Mabel. She and Geraldine had lain late in bed, as in fact had Lady Essington, and so made their first appearance in a desultory manner when the day was advanced.

"Anna is an idiot," explained Geraldine to her sister's question, "that's what is the matter. Yes, Anna, I repeat that you must have known what it was coming to. He has flirted enough with you."

"There's the evil," cried Anna. "Men are so much given to flirt now-a-days, that you cannot tell what is flirting and what is real: and woe be to the feelings of any girl who mistakes the false for the

genuine. If the Duke of St. Ives has flirted with me—though I hate the word, and I have *not* encouraged him—others have flirted with him. Some of you girls have been ready to pull him to pieces in the contest."

"Mamma, just listen to her—she says she has not encouraged him!" exclaimed Mabel, with a smile.

"I have not encouraged him more than I could help," said Anna. "When he has talked to me, I have answered him; when he has asked me to dance, I have not said No. I like talking, and I like dancing. Was it my place to assume that he was only paving the way to invite me to be Madame la Duchesse?"

"You have worked on for it, though, in your quiet way," retorted Mabel, who was going on in this way out of sheer vexation that the prize should have escaped herself.

"Indeed, indeed, I have not, Mabel," spoke Anna earnestly. "He has been always seeking me, and I could not avoid that; but I have *not* encouraged him."

Mabel retorted. "Only last night you went to his house, caressing the flowers he left for you."

A suppressed smile crossed Anna's face. "Well, it is done, and it cannot be undone," she rejoined; "but I must repeat, that he has acted as—as—only one gifted with as little brains as the Duke of St. Ives could act."

"What do you mean is done, and can't be undone?"

"His speaking to papa. And I say he has no brains, to go and do it."

Lady Essington lifted her hands. "Take care, young lady, that you don't show these airs before him; or he may think twice ere he completes the bargain. And here he is—he said he should call early."

But the footsteps ascending the stairs were not the Duke of St. Ives'. They were those of the gentleman with whom Anna had snatched a waltz the previous night, during the brief period of his stay in the crowded rooms. They were the steps of a chieftain, bold and fearless; of one who carried his head erect, and on whose lofty features might be traced the consciousness of a descent second to none. The servant threw wide the door:

"The Lord of Pomeroy."

The Lord of Pomeroy was not the Duke of St. Ives; and some little disappointment may have been felt by Lady Essington. But, if so, it was but momentary, for the Lord of Pomeroy was also a favoured visitor. He told them of the painful accident to his friend Stanton: a young man who was attached like himself to one of the embassies abroad, and was just now over here on leave.

Before he had quite finished the recital, the old Dowager Faulcot came in with her two nieces; intimate friends of the Essingtons, who might call early or late. Lady Faulcot began a rare tale of scandal,

more interesting in its way than the gun accident to Stanton. In the midst of it Anna escaped to the conservatory, and was followed by the Lord of Pomeroy.

"Leolin, he has asked for me!" she exclaimed, when they were sheltered in that retreat, and beyond the ears in the drawing-room.

"St. Ives?"

"Oh, yes. He spoke to papa last night in the rooms—actually in his own ball-rooms. If he had but spoken to me, I could have given him an answer quietly, and there would have been an end to him, and nobody the wiser. I am not sure that it is honourable to tell you this, Leolin; but—but—papa accepted him."

Leolin Pomeroy's brow flushed, for he loved her with a passionate and powerful love: but the pride of his race rose within him. The Lord of Pomeroy, secure in his remote and high descent of untold generations, afraid of the new Duke of St. Ives, whose ancestors, seventy years ago, were of the people! Anna glanced at him timidly, her lovely eyes full of tears. He drew her to him, and bent down his face with a tender whisper.

"Which shall it be?—the Duke of St. Ives, or the Lord of Pomeroy?"

"Oh, Leolin, why do you ask me? You know; you know."

"Is your father at home?" he inquired, between his kisses. "Can he be seen?"

"Would you ask him now, Leolin? Now?"

"Now. Before I leave the house. You must be my promised wife this day, love, if you would not be his."

They drew apart hurriedly, for voices broke on their ears, ominously near. Lady Essington and the dowager and the rest came in view, perhaps to see what the two young people might be doing. They saw Anna seated on a large flower-pot turned upside down, training the refractory branches of a rare plant, with a refractory name that nobody yet ever succeeded in spelling; and the Lord of Pomeroy ungallantly standing with his back to her, lost in contemplation of the wonderful American aloe, which blossomed but once a century.

Lady Faulcot's sight was keen, and her imagination crafty. "You should have your eyes about you," cried she confidentially to the countess. "Anna is just at the age that she may get her head turned, and he does not want for attractions, that young Lord of Pomeroy."

"My dear dowager, Anna is all safe. She marries St. Ives."

"Eh! what? Who says so?" ejaculated the dowager.

"He made his proposals for her to the earl yesterday. It is all settled."

"Mercy on the rest of the girls, then!" cried Lady Faulcot. "What will they do?—they are all rampant after St. Ives. Is it true that young Stanton has shot his head off?" continued she, pass-

ing further on between the beautiful green plants, and addressing Leolin Pomeroy.

"Not his head, madam. One of his ears and part of his hand."

"What incautious simpletons you young men are to get toying with guns! I'd rather play with a wild hyena, for my part."

"There was a flaw in it," said Leolin. "Bishop ——"

"I daresay, lord. That's sure to be the tale—Bishop, Bishop! he's always in fault; never your own careless awkwardness.—Anna, we are to congratulate you, I hear. Take care, child, that you don't get a stray shot sent into yourself. When this news shall obtain wind, there are some would give you one, if they dared."

"What news?" asked Anna innocently.

"That you have accepted St. Ives. All the girls were running after him you know."

"That she should speak of it in this open manner—before her nieces, and before him!" mentally uttered the confused countess. "She talks of young men being simpletons! what's she, I should like to ask?"

"Is the earl at home?" quietly demanded the Lord of Pomeroy of Lady Essington.

"I believe he is in his study. Do you want him?"

"I will go to his study," said the lord.

The dowager Lady Faulcot took her departure with her train: but not before Anna had whispered a word to her that her congratulations were premature—of which the old lady believed as much as she chose. Not long after that, Anna heard the study bell ring, and the Lord of Pomeroy was shown out. Then came a message to Lady Essington: the earl wanted her in his study. Mabel and Geraldine followed their mother out of the room, but not to the study; and this left Anna alone.

She was alone when the next caller was shown in—the Duke of St. Ives. The young duke, seizing on the favourable opportunity, repeated in person the offer he had made to her father the previous night. Anna, very much distressed now that it had come to a point, refused him, kindly but firmly.

"This cannot be your final decision!" exclaimed the young man, displaying emotion.

"It is indeed."

"But why have you suffered me to hope?"

"Nay," said Lady Anna, "I have not suffered it: at least, not willingly. What have I done to encourage hope? How could I have acted otherwise than I have? You have been pleased to single me out, rather more perhaps than you have other girls, but I shrank from your attentions instead of ——"

"It was that shrinking from me that won me," interrupted the simple-hearted duke; "it was indeed."

"I am very sorry: but I can't see that I am to blame. I could

not speak to you and say you must not court me, before you first spoke to me. I could not dare to assume that you were about to propose to me, without being sure of it."

The duke allowed that: but he grew hot and somewhat incoherent in his disappointment.

"Lady Anna, can you not say that you—that you—will let it wait awhile, and think of it?"

"Oh no, I cannot; it must not wait a day. I can never say otherwise than I do now."

The duke nervously pulled his glove about. "I would try to make you so happy: I would not have a will but yours."

Anna was nervous also: it was her first essay at a refusal. She stammered out that he was very kind; very.

"I'm sure I thought you liked me."

"And I do like you, very much indeed," she impulsively answered, in the candour of her heart. "But not—not in that way. I like you very much better than any of the other young men we know. Except—except perhaps one or two," she lamely added, with a blush.

"I am afraid you love some one else, Lady Anna."

Her face presented a picture of confusion.

"I see how it is," he whispered. "I have been indulging a foolish hope—and it had no foundation. I hope you will forgive me."

"We can be friends still," she answered earnestly, glancing almost appealingly at him through her glistening tears, for few natures were truer and tenderer than Anna Hetley's. "Believe that I would not willingly have played with you."

"I do; I do believe you. It has been my fault—my mistake."

"If you had but just spoken one little word to me!—but, as I say, I could not speak to you," she timidly repeated, feeling, in her concern and sympathy, that she had been the unwitting cause of inflicting some cruel wrong upon him. The duke prepared to leave.

"I shall never care for anyone else, Lady Anna."

He nervously put out his hand, then drew it back, then put it out again. Anna frankly put her hand into his—and pressed it kindly: some vague idea running through her mind that it might soften the blow.

The duke sighed. "I think the next best thing to having you—will be to have your sister," he observed, deliberating with himself. "If I cannot be your husband, it will be something to be your brother. I don't love her, it's true; but I shall never love anyone now."

The candid avowal, and the rueful tone it was made in, changed the current of Anna's feelings. She almost laughed.

"Oh, yes; that would be delightful, if you could only fancy one of them. Which of them do you mean, Mabel or Geraldine?"

"Well, I don't know," said the duke; "I have not thought about it. I must talk to my mother. Good-bye."

Shaking her hand again, he quitted the room, and was out of the house quickly. Anna, inexpressibly relieved in more ways than one, hummed a waltz, and danced round and round the room.

Lady Essington had found her husband waiting for her in his study. A little man, wearing a black velvet cap on his head, and a flowery chintz dressing-gown: a merry-hearted little man, who liked to take things pleasantly.

"Did you send Pomeroy to me?" he asked.

"I told him you were here. Why?"

"He wants Anna."

The countess questioned with her eyes and lips. "Wants her for what?"

"To be his wife."

"What a donkey he must be!" uttered the lady, irascibly. "Why, the old Dowager of Barham told him that she was going to marry St. Ives!"

"But is she going to marry St. Ives?"

"Of course she is," retorted the countess.

"She may like somebody else better. The Lord of Pomeroy says she does."

"I wish the Lord of Pomeroy had been buried in the Pomeroy vaults before he had come upsetting things in this way!" was the intemperate rejoinder of Lady Essington. "There's not such a match in all England as St. Ives; if Anna were to refuse him I would never forgive her. Besides, she can't now: that prating old dowager is off to tell it to all London."

The earl laughed: he enjoyed the joke. "You and the dowager must settle it between you," said he. "I suppose, my lady, you told her first. But, if Anna has got the Lord of Pomeroy in her head, she can't marry St. Ives."

My lady scowled. "Would you let her marry Pomeroy, with St. Ives in the way?"

"I'd let her marry Pomeroy with St. Ives in the way, or without him," returned the good-natured earl. "When young people take mutual likings, where's the use of standing out against them? Had there been anything objectionable in Pomeroy, any cause against his wooing her, why did you suffer them to meet? Here has he been in the house continually, like a tame cat. Not that I complain: I like the young fellow."

"I have allowed him to come in like a tame cat, as you elegantly express it, because I was in hopes he would take a fancy to Geraldine," was the answer, sharply spoken. "I am sure it is to Geraldine he has mostly talked."

"When he has talked aloud," put in Lord Essington, with another laugh. "I always thought it was Anna, and so I tell you. They were for ever together when we were abroad."

"My daughters have been too properly reared to allow themselves to become attached where it is not expedient," said she, loftily.

"But nature's nature," cried the earl.

"And training's training," retorted the countess. "What if they did see each other sometimes abroad?—he was nothing but a younger son then, and had no more thought of coming into the Pomeroy estates than I had."

"He says she loves him; and he says he ardently loves her," was the only answer the earl gave to this. "I believe he does."

"Love!" rejoined my lady, scornfully. "Love must give place to expediency. Did he speak of the duke?"

"He did," replied the earl, his face in a glow of merriment. "He called him names: The bran'-new Brummagem duke!"

Lady Essington's eyes flashed fire. "Shameful! How dared he?"

"Dared? Oh, come now! These old, old families, these long-pedigreed aristocrats (we are not very old ourselves, you know, Lucinda), do hold in contempt new people. In point of descent, the Duke of St. Ives is not worthy to buckle on the garter of the Lord of Pomeroy."

Lady Essington's tart rejoinder was stopped. She heard the duke's voice upon the stairs; and, opening the door, saw him passing along the hall. He was departing after his interview with Anna. Lady Essington hastened to accost him; but the duke, ever so far on then, looked back with a cold bow only, and was gone.

"She has been refusing him!" exclaimed the countess, sinking in a chair. "I'd lay all the money I am worth, that she has been refusing him. And I never knew he was here!—and that old Dame of Barham will have gone with her open mouth round the town! If Anna has been so great an idiot, I think I shall beat her!"

She bent her angry and hasty steps to the drawing-room, and caught my young Lady Anna in the midst of her waltz. Arresting her by the arm, she swung her round the other way; not very gently.

"What have you been doing to the Duke of St. Ives?"

"Mamma! how you startled me!"

"What have you been doing to the Duke of St. Ives?"

"Oh, please don't be angry!" implored Anna. "I only told the duke I could not marry him."

"You wicked girl! Not marry him! Not marry St. Ives! Mabel, come here," interrupted the countess, hearing Lady Mabel enter the next room, "look at your sister there: see the figure she cuts! She has been refusing St. Ives."

"You have not?" debated Mabel, slowly, speaking to Anna. "You are not quite a fool, *au fond*."

"Such a fuss!" cried Anna, goaded into rebellion. "Who's St. Ives? The Lord of Pomeroy calls him ——"

"Be still, you shameless child! How dare you mention Pomeroy

to my face ?—after sending him to your papa with a tale that you had fallen in love with him, and he with you ! "

Anna stood with blushing cheeks and drooping eyelids. They might read in her face that it was no fable, the love existing between her and Leolin.

" Mabel, he called St. Ives a bran'-new Brummagem duke, or some such vulgarism ; and—and "—my lady hardly knew whether to subside into hysterics, or to shake Anna—" your father takes his part ; says he shall have her."

" He is the Lord of Pomeroy," observed Anna, in a low tone. " But for the Duke of St. Ives wanting me, mamma, you would never have thought of objecting to him."

" Right, child," exclaimed the earl, who had come in now, and was ready to burst with suppressed laughter. " I say if they had not wanted you to have young Pomeroy, he should not have been allowed to come here."

" Well, papa," cried Mabel, sharply, " I never thought you would have upheld Anna in such conduct."

" What conduct ? " asked the earl.

" She has encouraged the duke shamefully ; nobody else has had a chance with him; and I do say that to turn round upon him now is not good conduct. Last night that ever was, she went parading his bouquet in his own rooms."

Lord Essington, for all his good nature, had as keen a sense of what was right and wrong as other people. His face wore a displeased look as he turned to Anna. She bit her lips to hide a smile.

" Two bouquets came for me, papa. The one was a beauty, and mamma ordered me to use it."

" But you had no right to use it," screamed the countess, " if you meant to reject the duke to-day."

" But it was not the duke's," returned Anna ; " the duke's was the one we left at home. It was the Lord of Pomeroy's."

A pause. They were taking in the sense of the words : of the treason.

" You little deceitful ——— " began her mother. But the earl burst into a hearty laugh, which drowned the rest of the reproach.

As will probably have been gathered by the reader, Leolin Pomeroy, unlike his brother George, had lost no time in assuming his new honours, as head of his house. Resigning his diplomatic post at once, he hastened to London, made a flying visit to the abbey, and then went back to London again, all within a week. His attraction was the Lady Anna Hetley, whom he had met and seen a great deal of abroad. He had not dared to hope for her when he was one of the many nameless, obscure attachés : but he meant to have her now that he was Lord of Pomeroy.

CHAPTER XV.

LADY ANNA.

"WHAT slur is it that lies on the Pomeroy escutcheon? I am almost sure there is one."

The question was put by Lady Geraldine; and her mother at once began to ransack her memory. She fancied she had heard of something disagreeable that happened in the family a few years ago. The Essingtons had not been intimate with the Pomeroys: the eldest daughter, Lucy, had once, when staying with some people in the same county, been taken to the abbey on a short visit. Lucy was married now, and lived in Ireland. Last year, during a stay the Essingtons had made on the continent, they had seen a good deal of the young attaché. He was plain and poor Leolin Pomeroy then. He was the lord now: but it was most unreasonable of him to come after Anna when the Duke of St. Ives wanted her. Lady Essington was not a woman to give up her way or her will without a fight to keep it. She had set her heart upon marrying Anna to the duke, who could hardly count his riches, and she did not choose to be frustrated by the (comparatively speaking) poor Lord of Pomeroy. This suggestion of Geraldine's was, therefore, as welcome to her as gold; for, if there was a hole in the Pomeroy coat, it was clearly her duty to find it. Should it turn out to be a large one, she might make it a pretext for declining the alliance.

Down, on the spur of the moment, went Lady Essington to Lincoln's Inn, to the offices of that noted firm of solicitors, Hildyard and Prael. Mr. Hildyard, a most respected Roman Catholic gentleman, was the confidential adviser of the Essingtons, also of the Pomeroys: if there was anything amiss he would know it. Lady Essington was at once admitted to him—an elderly, neat, silent man, who always dressed in black with a white shirt-frill, and was altogether of the old school. It was not the first conference by many that Lady Essington had held with him in that private room of his. Her husband had a vast deal of trouble with their only son, the spendthrift Viscount Cardine, and she liked to interfere sometimes herself.

Home she came to-day, rather dissatisfied. Mr. Hildyard had assured her that he knew of nothing against the Pomeroys—with the exception of the fatal quarrel between Guy and Rupert. Leolin stood as high as a young man could stand; high in character, and honour.

"Mamma," spoke Geraldine, as her mother entered, "you might have spared yourself the visit. Old Mrs. Knox has been here, and told us all. The late lord killed his brother."

"The brother killed the late lord," corrected Lady Essington. "It was done in a scuffle."

"Mrs. Knox called it murder."

"A scuffle—that's what old Hildyard called it. But he is as close as wax. It was not the late lord, however, Geraldine. That was George, who has recently died, and who never came home at all."

"It was Guy: the one that Lucy knew. Mrs. Knox says the inquest brought it in wilful murder, and the brother who did it is being looked for still. Anyway, whether killing or murder, it was disreputable."

"Most disreputable," warmly assented Lady Essington. "Where's Anna?"

"Papa called her down to the study," crossly answered Geraldine, who was often in a temper the reverse of amiable, and was especially so to-day. She had had private hopes herself of the new Lord of Pomeroy: and now he had cast upon her the unpardonable slight of passing her over for her younger sister.

The countess hastened to the study to see what treason might be hatching. Once that simple husband of hers, who had as little notion of the social proprieties of life as an owl, and that simple Anna, who had less, got plotting together without herself to keep them in order, there was no guessing at the result.

The result displeased the countess. Her worst fears were realized —Anna had been told she should wed the Lord of Pomeroy.

"Anna, are your affections fixed upon Leolin Pomeroy?" began the earl, in his usual simple, straightforward way, when he had called her down to his study and closed the door.

Anna's cheeks grew crimson. She turned to the window, which had an agreeable view of a small back yard, to hide them.

"Or upon the Duke of St. Ives?"

She glanced up at him now. "Oh, papa, no! I don't care for the duke. I only like him as a friend; I could not be his wife. And—and ——"

"And what? Speak freely, my dear. This is a solemn subject."

"I thought also that a union with the duke would not be quite suitable for me. We are not of the same faith."

"True. But so many intermarriages take place now that—at any rate, your mother sees no objection. We will let that question be. I only wish to give you a word of advice, Anna: before deciding irrevocably, make sure that you know your own mind. The young men are both desirable; I like them much. Pomeroy has the advantage in lineage, St. Ives in money: not but that, in my opinion, Pomeroy is quite rich enough. The wife of the Duke of St. Ives, let him marry whom he may, will be mistress and master—he will make a docile, obedient, kind husband. The Lords of Pomeroy, on the contrary, have the reputation of liking to rule their wives with an imperative will."

The tears stood in her eyes as she looked beseechingly up. "Papa,

I could not respect or love a man who would yield his will to mine in great things. I must be able to reverence my husband, to find him one that I can obey: and I am certain that Leolin will ever love me and be indulgent to me."

"Be it so, then," said the earl, as he kissed her forehead. "Long life and happiness to you, Lady of Pomeroy!"

It was at this critical juncture that Lady Essington interrupted them, her bonnet on, her shawl not unfastened, just as she had come in from Mr. Hildyard's. When she found that her husband had weakly given his promise, she turned upon him in anger.

"Why, you must be a born idiot, Lord Essington! Think of the duke's money!"

"Money! Oh, ah, he has a good deal of that. More money than brains." And my young Lady Anna, being so far wanting in reverence as to laugh, her mother grasped her arm angrily.

"I have a great mind to shake you, you undutiful child. Who is he, that Leolin Pomeroy, beside the Duke of St. Ives? The other day he was but a miserable attaché."

"But, mamma, he is Lord of Pomeroy now."

"Lord of fiddlestick! Have you reflected what it is to be a duchess, and to be richer than nearly every other woman in London?"

"I should not know what to do with the riches," said Anna, simply. "Besides, the duke is not of our faith."

"What of that? He would not interfere with your faith, or you with his. I daresay you might have the honour of converting him in the first twelvemonth."

"I should not try," said Anna.

"Not try!"

"No. I am not clever enough for that. And I think good people like to keep to the faith in which they have been reared—if they do their duty in it."

"Oh, indeed!" spoke the countess, sarcastically, while the earl nodded approval at Anna. "How highly ridiculous you are! You could let his faith alone if you chose."

"Oh, but I should not like it at all," pleaded Anna, the tears falling on her flushed cheeks. "I should not like for my husband to worship in one church and I in another."

She was much excited; her fingers were interlaced, one with another, tears were streaming down. Lord Essington fondly laid his hand upon her head to reassure her.

"And indeed, mamma, for these reasons and others, I *cannot* marry the Duke of St. Ives. Papa has been so kind as to say that he does not object to the Lord of Pomeroy: if you object, why I must remain unmarried. I could never have anyone but Leolin."

"There, there; don't fret," said the earl, soothingly. "I've said it, and I'll stick to it. The Lord of Pomeroy is quite rich enough for you and for me, Anna; and your mother would have thought him

so, but for St. Ives. You be off upstairs, my dear, and tell Pomeroy I say so. That's he, now gone up, I fancy: I told him he might call for his answer this afternoon."

"*You* have done a pretty thing!" snapped my lady, as Anna escaped. "Letting the best match in the world go out of the family!"

"One can't be always wise," smiled the earl, ever good-humoured. "I am not going to have my children made unhappy for all the fine matches in christendom."

"You'd rather see them old maids. I know that."

"I don't know but I'd as soon see them old maids, as not," he avowed. "Marriage is all a lottery. But that's not the present question. I don't myself understand how Anna is to be an old maid if she marries Leolin Pomeroy."

"You always were aggravating, you know, Essington."

"I really don't know it: I did not think I was," he answered, still smiling. "I confess, looking at the matter with my eyes, the Lord of Pomeroy seems to be an exceedingly suitable match, ay, and a good match, for any one of the girls. I say you would have thought so but for getting St. Ives on your brain."

"I have not got St. Ives on my brain."

"No? Well, it looks like it."

"But for me, Essington, the girls might go altogether to the dogs. Look at Lucy. Because she fell in love with that foolish fellow, Captain Blake, and he with her, you must needs go and let them marry! Of course she has been buried alive ever since at that bog-hole of a place of his, in Ireland, living no doubt upon potatoes."

Lord Essington's face lighted up with mirth. "It is a very pretty place," he said. "I would ask nothing better than to live there myself; and Blake's a good fellow, and Lucy's as happy as the day is long. And, his six thousand a year will buy them something better than potatoes, I take it."

"Do you *really* mean to let her have him?"

"Have whom—Blake? Why she has had him these three years."

"There! Do you aggravate me, or don't you? You know I meant Anna."

"Oh, Anna! I'm sure I thought you were speaking of Lucy. Well, yes; there's no help for it—and I expect she has told Pomeroy so by this time. It is not my fault: I did not choose him; you must acknowledge that, Lucinda."

"They chose one another, it seems," snapped the countess.

"Quite so. And you, by letting them be always together, winked at it. Pardon the word."

"But I thought he came for Geraldine," said poor, mistaken Lady Essington, with something very like a sob. "At least, we hoped it. St. Ives was after Anna, and who was to suspect that Pomeroy would interfere with *him?* I should have been the envy of every house in London had we secured St. Ives."

The earl laughed. To his unsophisticated nature, these anglings after desirable settlements, so rife in the great world, were a source of both wonder and amusement.

Meanwhile, Anna, escaping to her own room, effaced the marks of tears from her face and then went to the drawing-room. Leolin, waiting alone, uneasy, full of suspense, turned when the door opened. She closed it, and halted there. He walked towards her: his face grave, his voice low, his hand outstretched.

"How is it to be, Anna?" he began, with some emotion. "Your father would not give me any answer this morning: he said I must come again."

But the tender light in her blue eyes, the soft blushes that came and went upon her cheeks, told him enough. With a faint cry of pleasure, he caught her to him.

"My darling, I see it! You are to be mine?"

"Papa has left it to me, Leolin."

"And then—and then"—he was kissing her between every interval—"my darling will leave it to me. And I say she must be mine without any unnecessary loss of time."

"Oh, but not yet, Leolin."

"Not yet! Why?" he asked, taking a chair near her.

"Oh, I don't know. It is only just settled—only to-day."

"But it is a great many to-days that we have loved each other. Ah, Anna, what should we have done had I remained the poor attaché? What might be in your mind I did not presume to ask then; but I know that I was troubled and tormented beyond measure, fearing that, poor as I was, and with no position, I might not presume to ask for you. Now and again it has crossed my mind to go out to India and beg my good-natured brother George to give me an income. I think he would have done it."

"Was he very good-natured?"

"Very. Few natures are so generously good as was that of George Pomeroy. He was the least selfish man I ever knew. He was not married, you know, had no children to provide for; and, I do believe, had I gone to him and told him about you, that he would have made things easy for us. What of the duke?"

"I saw him after you left. I told him how impossible it was that I should accept him—and, Leolin, I did say that I had longed to give him a hint before, only that of course I could not: young ladies may not speak first. He was very kind when he fully understood how it was, and I said I hoped we should always be good friends."

"To be sure. We will invite him down to Pomeroy. I like St. Ives myself, and —— What a lovely child!"

A little fairy arrayed in white, with delicate features, large, lustrous eyes of light brown, and silky curls, was peeping into the room. Lady Anna held out her hand.

"Come in, Annaline."

The child advanced modestly and timidly. Leolin drew her towards him.

"What a gentle little thing! what a sweet expression!" he said aside to Anna. "Who is she?"

"Tell your name to this gentleman, my dear," said Anna.

"Annaline Hetley," lisped the child.

"Annaline?" repeated Leolin. "I never heard the name before. It is a pretty one."

"I think so, too; prettier than Anna."

"Ah, no; not prettier than Anna. Anna is the nicest name in the world."

"She is the little daughter of Captain Hetley: his father was papa's first cousin. Frank is a great favourite of papa's," added Anna, changing her language to French, and speaking freely in her very open nature, "and he deserves to be so. But he is very poor, and he was sadly improvident in marrying early."

"As improvident, I suppose, as I should have been called had I married you when I had nothing to marry upon," laughed Leolin.

"That is just poor Frank's case," she said, her eyes lighting up. "I don't think he has much besides his pay. He fell in love with the daughter of a brother officer, and married her."

"She was poor, also, I suppose?"

"Of course. And she was of no family, therefore I am sorry to say that all our family despise her, except papa, and treat her rather cavalierly. But oh, Leolin, she is one of the best, and most refined, and nicest of women! If anyone ever had a treasure in a wife, it is Frank. Papa fears, though, he will have to sell out."

"Have you a doll, little one?" asked Leolin, returning to his English again.

"No," said the child, "I dave it to Franky when he was ill. Dere was a dreat big one in a shop, but mamma said it was too dear."

"No doll! What do you do all day?"

"I play with Franky; and when mamma has the headache I help her."

"Help her, you little woman! How do you help her?"

"I sit on the tarpet and watch her, and ring the bell when she tells me; and sometimes she lets me nurse the baby on my lap. Mamma says I am her dear little help-mate."

Leolin laughed. "How old are you?"

"I am four, and Franky is five, and Mary is two, and baby is free monfs. She tan't talk."

"I think I must buy you a great big doll. What would you do with it?"

"I should let Franky nurse it. Franky's ill."

"But Franky has your old one."

"No; he 'queezed it and the b'an fell out."

"Then I think we must get one for you and one for Franky," concluded Leolin, his eyes fixed on the sweet little up-turned face, that seemed, somehow, older than its years.

The child's eyes sparkled. "P'ease let Franky's be the best," she whispered.

"To be sure. Franky's best, and yours better. What a little self-sacrificing maiden it is," added Leolin, "this pretty Annaline."

Before the day was over, Lady Essington had come round, so far as to be gracious to Leolin. The fact truly was that she would have found no fault with the alliance of the Lord of Pomeroy—nay, have rejoiced proudly in it, had not the duke, with his riches and his grand title, inopportunely stepped in. The Lord of Pomeroy was rich, but the Duke of St. Ives was richer: and the more we have, you know, the more we covet.

"Did Guy, Lord of Pomeroy, leave any children?" enquired Lady Geraldine that evening of her mother when the family sat alone.

"A girl. No heir."

"I should not care to go to a home already occupied," continued she, for she had not got over her resentment. "I hear the widow lives there."

"She is welcome to live there," interposed Anna, her sweet voice a very panacea for all ills of temper. "The abbey is large enough for more than one household."

"When Anna becomes Lady of Pomeroy, the widow will subside into her proper place," spoke Lady Essington.

"It is usual for the widows of the Lords of Pomeroy to have their own apartments in the abbey," observed Anna. "Leolin has told me a great deal about the Pomeroy customs."

"Oh, the Pomeroys own to all sorts of old customs and traditions, and they think they must obey them: Mrs. Knox was saying so to-day," returned Geraldine. "They were always a peculiar and a superstitious race."

(*To be continued.*)

THE STRONGER VOW OF THE TWO.

By Bettina Wirth, Author of "Princess Eleanor."

NOT more than ten years ago, while Verona still sighed under foreign dominion, the old palace owned by the younger line of the "Portalupi" wore a dismal aspect. The last Portalupi lived there within those walls; a woman to whom nature had lent all her charms, who called beauty, talents, and a noble heart her own. It was certainly no fit place for her to live in, that old palace with its immense rooms, its tapestries, illustrating the deeds of her ancestors, its old-fashioned furniture, its silent retainers. She inhabited the back part of the house, where a small garden was somewhat more to her taste than the state rooms of the palace, which had been opened but once in her life. In this garden she had spent her childhood and part of her girlhood: an orphan entrusted to the care of servants, and to a nun, who had been placed at her side to act as governess and guide. The poor young heiress of the Portalupi had seen but few bright days in her life. All the gifts endowed upon her gave her no joy; they bore no fruits for her or others. Had she loved the nun with the pale face and grey eyes, who had been ever at her side, life might still have had some happiness, for nothing ever disturbed the tranquil succession of days. But Drusilla had an inborn dislike for the woman whose white nun's cap had overshadowed her cradle. When she began to understand what was said to her, Sister Agnes told her the history of her birth: told her that her mother had died in giving life to the little girl: that her father, passionately fond of his wife, had died of a broken heart not six months later. The poor child spent hours in thinking over the fate of her parents. Her only consolation was an uncle, a brother of her mother's, who sometimes came to see her: but who, an old bachelor himself, and living in a distant town, could not take the charge of her upon himself, although Drusilla often begged him, with tears in her eyes, to carry her away with him.

When Drusilla's fifteenth birthday came, her uncle visited her, and told her that he had chosen a husband for her, whose acquaintance she might however make, before deciding whether she would have him or not. Drusilla made her mind up to do the least she could —that is, to look at her predestined husband. He was a venerable old gentleman, of a family as rich and powerful as the Portalupis, but enough to make any other young girl utter a hasty—NO! But Drusilla had no means of comparing him with anyone else. She therefore thought she would try it. Anything was better than living in the old house with nobody to speak to but Sister Agnes.

It was thus that Drusilla entered the sacred state of matrimony, and it did not turn out to be what she had thought it. Sister Agnes did not leave her as she had hoped, but came with her into her new abode. She therefore had the choice of either her husband's or her nurse's society. The former took very little notice of her. Why he had married her she failed to see; it must have been for some mysterious reason, which he jealously concealed from her. She had been wife to him only in name. He very soon fell ill, and then Drusilla's truly feminine nature awoke. She nursed him with a daughter's tenderness. He died blessing her, as he would have blessed a daughter—but her heart did not break when she changed her beautiful dresses for the trailing black garments befitting a widow. A strange little widow she was, with her childish face, and the innocent eyes, which still looked inquiringly into the world, as though not one of life's mysteries had been revealed to her.

She very soon left her husband's palace, and returned to the garden where she had spent her childhood. At first the few whom she had come to know during her marriage visited her often; but Sister Agnes knew how to keep them aloof, and about a year after the death of her husband Drusilla was again alone.

One day her uncle came on a visit. And when he saw her, a lonely widow, without the sorrow which makes solitude desirable, with so much of a child still in her, he pitied her. He stayed with her a long time, and somewhat changed the monotonous course of her life. The widow's garments were laid aside, and society was sought and received. But very soon Drusilla's uncle discovered that his niece had after all been very much neglected. Her education was not what a Portalupi's ought to have been, although her manners would, in their graceful simplicity, have become a princess. Thus scarcely a day passed without some blunder being committed, which was agony to the uncle, who began to be very proud of his beautiful niece, and which cost Drusilla herself many a tear. A teacher was engaged, and as Drusilla objected to an old professor—she had had enough of old men—a young priest from the neighbouring convent of Santa Philomena was chosen.

For some time the uncle and Sister Agnes were present at the lessons, at the end of which the young Abbé retired with a bow. But very soon Drusilla's uncle said it would be but polite to ask him to accompany them in their drives and walks, and the young fair scholar with the small dimpled hands quite agreed with him. At last the uncle's presence was required in Florence. He departed, and earnestly begged Drusilla to be attentive to her lessons, as he intended taking her with him the very next time that he came to Verona, when he would show her the world, which she must make herself fit to shine in. The next day when Abbate Ruggiero had given his lesson, he bowed politely, and moved towards the door, as though it had not even been necessary to explain why he did not intend sharing her drive or

walk. She rose with an offended air, and walked to the broad window without saluting him, when the idea struck her that he could not have meant offence; delicacy had whispered to him to act as he did.

"Abbate," she called in her sweetest tone, "come into the garden with me—I have to show you a splendid yellow rose that opened this morning," and without heeding the expressive look of Sister Agnes, she took his arm, and, walking out upon the marble terrace, descended the steps to the garden, where she led him to a sheltered laurel walk. In her own outright child manner, she at once came to the subject uppermost with her.

"Abbate! Why will you no longer walk or drive with me? Is it because my uncle has left me alone, and we are both young?"

He could not speak the words of excuse he had prepared for the occasion—so much frankness he could not but meet candidly.

"Is it not natural, Madonna?" he asked in return. "I did not think that my society could be welcome to you. I suppose you do not care to go out with Sister Agnes alone?"

"I do not mean to walk or drive with Sister Agnes at all. I have ordered the pony-basket, and I intend driving you to my little villa on the border of the Adige, which is being prepared to receive me. I intend spending some summer months there. I hear the horses' hoofs on the gravel—Will you come?"

How could he do otherwise? Before Sister Agnes had reached a window, they both flew off at the quickest pace the ponies could muster, with nothing but a diminutive groom behind them.

Ruggiero, with his twenty-three years, and his heart full of blighted hopes and ideals, thought he had never seen so beautiful a creature as this girl-widow at his side. For the first time in all his life he blessed his dress, which alone made it possible that he could enjoy her company as he did now. The cloud which always overshadowed his young forehead dispersed. He asked Drusilla for the reins, and the way in which he encouraged the ponies to still greater speed had bright enjoyment in it. He showed the girl at his side beauties in nature she had not seen before—combinations of light and shade that had escaped her—he smiled, and nodded, and at last he laughed outright. Drusilla had never heard him laugh before, and thought him a hundred times handsomer, and more pleasant and congenial, than anyone she had ever seen. At last they reached the villa on the Adige.

They were welcomed by an old servant, who, for a life's service faithfully given, had received as a reward the post of honour of taking care of Drusilla's gem of a country-house on the river. Drusilla cut short his bows and expressions of joy at her arrival by telling him to have a repast ready in two hours' time. She answered his blank look by telling him to remove the cushions from the seat of the pony-chaise. Everything necessary that could not be had at the

villa, at this time of the year, was stored up there. Drusilla threw a triumphant look at the Abbate, who wondered at her foresight.

"I intend spending a delightful day in the country," she said, taking the Abbate's arm again. "Far from the dismal city and the more dismal palace, and the most dismal of all sisters—Agnes!"

The two roamed about the garden, where everything was blossoming as though eager to get ready by the time the young mistress arrived. She showed him her favourite view; the arbour in which she had played when a child; the bench on which the young girl had sat reading her first novel—"Paul and Virginia."

As they stood on the terrace overhanging the river, "Shall we not spend a happy time here!" she exclaimed, with a sigh.

His voice was sad as he answered: "We? Do you think it possible that I should ever come out here to see you?"

She turned upon him quickly, a bright light in her eye.

"Of course, you will be here every day—you will stay here altogether. What would become of my lessons and my learning if I spent a summer without looking at a book? Why ——"

She was going to add that, in planning her summer residence, she had all the while thought of him, and him alone as her companion; but with all her childishness she had womanly dignity enough to keep back the words. A blush ended the sentence for her.

Ruggiero objected. He found a hundred arguments to show that what it was his innermost heart's wish to do, was impossible. She refuted them all, and wound up by a saucy, independent speech that made her ten times more lovely in his eyes than before.

"I tell you, Sister Agnes has nothing at all to say. No one has a right to use their influence upon me, except those to whom I choose to grant that right. And that is only my uncle and, perhaps—well, yes—you. Your convent will not refuse me the favour I ask of it."

She drew him along, with her youthful impetuousness, which had awakened to full life to-day, over gravel-walks and terraces, out into the open air and the sunshine, and there, seated on a rustic bench under a far-spreading magnolia, he spoke words she had never yet heard. He told her of God as he knew and loved and feared the Almighty Presence; spoke an enthusiast's words with an enthusiast's expression, that brought persuasion with it. He gave her few but clear notions of what he believed to be the truth. The girl was sorry to take leave of a great deal that had constituted religion with her; but she had been taught so much that was beautiful from the mouth of the young priest, she could not but believe him. He appeared to her great and good and far above the class of persons she had intimately known from childhood. She replied neither by word nor look, but held her eyes steadfastly bent to the ground, even when he had ceased speaking. At last she drew a long breath, and asked:

"Do you think God would hear our prayer if we spoke it here,

under the magnolia-tree on profane ground, without the emblems of religion around us?"

"Certainly, Madonna. There is no profane ground on all the earth. God has created it all, and His Hand has sanctified it: better than men can by speaking a blessing over solitary spots, whereon they build their churches."

Drusilla remained silent for a long time, and even while walking with the Abbate through garden and house she spoke but little. Yet she had a vague feeling of enjoyment about her, and when she sat down to her board, richly dressed and ornamented, and no one beside her but the young Abbate, she smiled once more. After dinner they sat on the terrace by the river, comfortably sipping their coffee, and without a servant in attendance. Drusilla nestled back in her arm-chair, and in her sweetest tone said:

"Abbate, will you do me a very great favour? Will you tell me why you took holy orders? Why you are a priest, and not a rich young man driving your horses about town, and dancing with young ladies at the fashionable balls?"

"You have answered yourself, Madonna. It is because I am not a rich man that I am a priest. My family is one of old renown, but if we wish to keep the sound of our name intact, we must leave the eldest son in possession of all we have—we others do what we can to live. My brothers are in the army, the navy—I do not know why my father chose me to go into holy orders. I obeyed him when I did not know what obedience brought with it—and I think it the man's duty to redeem the boy's promise. I have always been well treated in my convent; and although my superiors know that I have an opinion of my own in religious questions, yet they allow me to pursue my road unmolested. I am at peace and wish for nothing. That is a point gained at my age, I think, when passions soar high and endeavour to draw us to ruin and decay."

Drusilla had not understood all that he said; yet she felt that it was not all truth. He must have fought and battled with himself before he gained supremacy over body and mind. After a pause she said it was high time to have the carriage ordered, and a few minutes later they were driving home in silence. In the immediate neighbourhood of the town she was herself again, and kindly asked Ruggiero to demand permission of his superior that very day, by which he would be free to accompany her to her villa on the Adige. He promised with a bright look, but expressed fears of being refused.

"And must you obey?" she asked.

"Every word of my superiors!" Ruggiero answered.

"And will you be glad to obey?"

"How can you ask such a question, Madonna. The time spent at your villa would be the happiest of my life, and worth thrice the rest of my days."

"Then you are not happy in your present condition—and have told me an untruth—you, a priest!"

She spoke those words as they halted before her palace door, where a number of servants stood ready to receive her. With a ceremonious bow she dismissed the Abbate, who returned to his convent with a slow step and a musing mind.

Abbate Ruggiero had scarcely returned to his convent when he was summoned before the superior. With a kind look and a soft voice unusual with him the superior began:

"Young brother! you have been busy all day in working for the honour and the splendour of the convent. In its name I thank you for the services you have rendered it."

"I have done nothing whatever whereby I deserve the gratitude of my convent," answered Ruggiero proudly, while a surprised look came into his eyes.

The superior's first words seemed to have been a snare wherewith to entrap the young man. In a severe tone he now continued:

"I thought you clever and pious enough not to need instructions when you entered the palace of the Portalupi. Cannot you see that the young countess is well disposed to renounce the world, which has been faithless to her, and take the veil in one of our nunneries? It was your task to encourage her intention."

"She has no intention of the kind that I know of," Ruggiero answered firmly. "She seems to me all life and joy, and I do not think that she has ever given a thought to entering a cloister. I cannot blame her. The convent's life is for the old and the disappointed."

The superior's brow darkened. "You speak strangely," he said, in a menacing tone. "You speak as ill befits a brother in St. Benedict's holy order. Are *you* old—are *you* disappointed? Donna Drusilla *must* enter a convent, and you, Ruggiero, are the man who must lead her on the right path—you must gain influence over her, and instil into her mind the desire to find a home with us."

"Seek another for this task," was Ruggiero's answer. "I cannot lend a hand to so ——"

The superior interrupted him. "Do not speak words for which I must punish you. I know that Donna Drusilla intends inviting you to her villa on the Adige for the whole summer. That is time enough for her conversion, which has been well prepared by Sister Agnes. You have your choice. Either you go as confessor to Donna Drusilla and do as I bid you—or else you leave Verona to-morrow for the mountains of Calabria, where there is plenty of work to do for our order. Fra Angelo goes to the villa on the Adige in your stead."

The words struck like a blow to Ruggiero's heart. Fra Angelo was a fanatic, who sought forgiveness for the sins of his youth by ill-treating his own body, and who was anything but indulgent to the

faults of others. Ruggiero pictured to himself the life Drusilla would lead between Sister Agnes and Fra Angelo. He never once thought of what he should have to endure in the mountains of Calabria; he only thought of her, and the probable result of Fra Angelo's mission. As he opened his mouth to answer, the superior, who had marked the change in his countenance, forestalled what he might have to say:

"Your answer to-morrow morning. We grant you time for consideration."

No sleep came to Ruggiero all that night. He fought the hardest struggle of his life. In the morning, as the bell rang for matins, his eyes were heavy, his body was worn out, but his mind had come to a firm resolve. He had made his mind up not to succeed in Donna Drusilla's conversion. Anything he might do would be well done if it kept Fra Angelo aloof from her.

Drusilla, who did not know how he had fought against himself before he succumbed, expressed her innocent delight at the announcement of his acquiescence in her desire. She stood alone with him in the deep recess of the parlour window, when he told her in broken words that the superior had granted him permission to take leave of the convent for the summer. Not even Sister Agnes was nigh. Before he had the slightest notion of what she was going to do, she had caught his white hand in hers, and deposited a slight kiss upon it. It had been the first, and remained the last. And, indeed, it was no unusual thing in pious Italy for a woman, ever so highly born, to kiss a priest's hand—had the servants seen it they would have supposed nothing wrong in the action. But it was different with these two. Why else would Drusilla have blushed painfully, while she dropped his hand in haste? Why would Ruggiero have lost all countenance, and gasped out words without sense, while his face turned from crimson to ashy paleness?

In less than a week after Ruggiero's conversation with the superior they settled down at the villa on the Adige.

Nothing interrupted the sweet quiet country life for a couple of weeks. Ruggiero had planned a list of lessons which must be rigidly kept up. The rest of the time was devoted to healthy exercise: driving, riding, walking, and rowing on the river. Sister Agnes was strangely indulgent to all Drusilla's whims and caprices She left her almost entirely to the care of the young Abbate: never accompanied them in their drives or walks: rarely entrusted herself to the boat they both loved to row. Had she dreamed how careless Ruggiero was in doing the task set him, she would have acted very differently. The young man was indeed intent upon elevating Drusilla's mind to what he himself revered, but not in the way Sister Agnes supposed. Drusilla innocently gave herself up to the pleasure of his society. She loved to hear him speak. From a pleasant companion and a learned teacher, he became an absolute necessity to her.

It was thus things stood when Drusilla's uncle arrived. He brought with him trunks and boxes that indicated a long stay, and surprised Drusilla with the news that a distant cousin of hers, who usually lived at Naples, and never had had a chance of seeing her, had begged to be introduced, and that he would arrive at the villa next day.

Drusilla pouted. "I intended having you all to myself for a while, and leading the quietest life down here; and now we must be all gaiety and amiability if this young man comes."

"You shall judge for yourself, and if you dislike Leo you may send him home again directly."

But Leo was not sent home. He was a lively, handsome young officer, and after having been quiet for a few hours after his arrival, he turned the house upside down, and every nook rang with his laughter and Drusilla's echo of it. Life changed in the villa on the Adige. Gay parties followed the homely quiet; country dances on the lawn took place almost daily; regattas on the river were arranged. Sister Agnes's face grew grim again, but Drusilla's eyes sparkled, and the dimples in her young cheeks scarcely ever vanished.

Ruggiero spent half his nights awake in his room, standing at the open window, his eyes fixed on the passing silvery wave of the Adige, his thoughts, he dared not acknowledge even to himself, where? He knew nothing to the disadvantage of Drusilla's cousin Leo, and yet he hated him, without being able to despise him. The young priest had sat for hours in the dark church, trying to understand his own feelings, and had reluctantly come to the conclusion, which spread terror over every atom of his person, that he dearly loved Drusilla; that naught but jealousy was the cause of his dislike to Leo. Many a severe battle with himself followed. Ruggiero tried to look upon Leo in the true light; he tried hard to like him; he tried to think him a fit husband for the charming girl-widow, whose heart he knew was purer than the white rosebud on the morn when it first opens to light and sunshine.

One summer night—Leo had been Drusilla's partner all day; a hundred smiles had beamed upon him—the brave young priest went into the garden to give vent to the pain he had disguised so many hours behind a smile. As he stood on the terrace sheltered by a far-spreading tree on the border of the garden, he heard soft voices below, spoken by persons who stood or sat on the marble landing-steps where the waves played musical tunes with a light boat fastened to a column of the landing-place.

"I am so glad you have come, Julia! so thankful!" a man's voice whispered. "You cannot have been blind to my admiration; my eyes must have told you a thousand times what I now say in words—that I love you passionately."

"Are you not here to woo and wed my mistress?"

"Certainly! but *we* never love the woman we marry!"

"And never marry the woman you love," Julia retorted wisely, although her wisdom seemed of little use to her, for she followed the man, whom Ruggiero had recognised to be Leo, into the boat, and softly echoed the song with which he accompanied the beat of the oar.

Ruggiero stood motionless on the terrace long after they had disappeared in the dusk of the night. He knew nothing of the world, whose faintest echo only reached the walls of his convent-cell. Such wanton treachery was a thing he could not at first conceive.

For a moment he had the thought of protecting Drusilla's maid from the danger impending, but she seemed herself so fully acquainted with it, and so openly and joyfully ran into it, that his interference would have been very unwelcome. His thoughts reverted to Drusilla. They might all play her false, *he* would not. He would seek her the very next morning, tell her all, and thus free her from present deceit and future misery. But little by little the conviction took hold of him that it was a bad part he intended playing—that it was most likely that something of his foolish, sinful passion would appear in his words. Ruggiero was sadly perplexed; his heart beat violently, his head throbbed; a deadly fever pervaded his body. Many hours elapsed before he came to a decisive conclusion, which was not one to still the pangs of his heart.

The next morning was a sad one for the inmates of the villa on the Adige. Julia, Drusilla's maid, came into the breakfast-room, and said that she had not been able to awaken her mistress. The young countess lay on her bed, apparently in sound sleep, but her breath came and went irregularly, her cheeks were hot and red, her pulse was feverish, whilst nothing could induce her to open her eyes. The uncle hastened upstairs, and finding the maid's tale true, he returned to Leo and Ruggiero, and said that a doctor must be sought immediately. Both young men offered to go, but Drusilla's uncle chose Leo for a messenger, perhaps because he thought him the best horseman, perhaps because he required the quiet Abbate's help in the sick-room.

Poor Drusilla lay helpless and senseless for weeks. A typhoid fever did its best to destroy that beautiful young form, whose strong youth battled hard with death. Kind nurses and nuns from a neighbouring convent lent their friendly aid—the doctor took up his abode at the villa, the uncle spent half his time at Drusilla's bedside. But a dark figure was constantly there, watching the suffering girl, watching the doctor, watching the nurses—Ruggiero's dark eyes never abandoned the spot where death was struggling with all he loved. He slept but a few hours during day-time, when he knew that the uncle would not stir from the sick room; no power on earth could have kept him from doing night-watch. The uncle valued his sacrifice, and began to think him the noblest young man he had ever met with. He loved the priest for his sympathy.

Leo asked for news of the progress of Drusilla's illness three times every day at the door of her room, but did not seem much inclined to share Ruggiero's care of his cousin, even if the priest had granted it. Julia—who, as a noisy magpie, had been excluded from her mistress's room—flirted to her heart's content, and tried to enliven Leo's solitary hours.

One night Ruggiero sat by a table, over which hung an alabaster lamp, whose soft light could not pass through Drusilla's heavy bed-curtains, with a book open before him. He did not read, however. He was never tired of watching the sweet girl's breath, which still came and went heavily. She was turned towards him, whilst on her other side sat Sister Agnes, quietly dropping the beads of her rosary. No other tone disturbed the death-like stillness of the room. Drusilla started in her sleep—Ruggiero was by her side in a moment. She drowsily opened her eyes, and looked about her wonderingly. Ruggiero recognised the look of consciousness, and gave the nun a sign to wake the doctor. She glided noiselessly out of the room.

"Then it is no dream!" Drusilla whispered, and a faint smile came like sunshine over her pale face.

The young priest fell upon his knees by her bedside. She slowly laid her hand upon his head, and said:

"Oh, my beloved, we have been very happy!"

Ruggiero felt that she mistook him for another. The thought thrilled through him, and yet her words made him happier than he could have expressed. The caress, the look that he stole from another were to be the light-tower of his life—the strong place to which he could cling in despair. His large, happy, beaming eyes opened wider, and shone gloriously up to her. She bent downwards, and gave him a long, soft kiss. When, scarcely a moment later, the doctor entered the room, he found the young priest prostrate on the floor, Drusilla in a fainting fit, back on her cushions.

Youth and strength got the better of illness and death—Drusilla was convalescent. The balmy summer air poured into the room through the open balcony; snowy soft cushions covered the couch on which the pale young girl lay, who had had so narrow an escape Her heart and soul beamed in her eyes. She was so glad to think that the beautiful world should not have been taken from her. Her thin white hand rested on her uncle's arm, as he looked at her, happier than even she was, to see her recover. It was her first day out of bed; she had asked him many questions concerning her household—her interest in every detail had returned with health.

"Where is the Abbate?" she blushingly asked.

"I do not know. Very likely shut up in his room with his books. He has not been in your room since you have returned to consciousness, and I may say health, although you are still so very weak, my poor one."

"And before that?" asked Drusilla, with an eager look.

"Before that he was all devotion to you, my child. Religion is, indeed, something sublime, if it can turn a man into the tenderest of nurses."

"I felt that he was near!" Drusilla said, more to herself than to her uncle. The latter thought to amuse her by telling her how disconsolate Leo had been while she was ill.

"Poor fellow! He did not know what to do with himself. You are his very life, for he yawned and flung himself about like a man who thinks life a burden."

"He did not divide the watch in my room with the Abbate, then?"

"No, child. That would scarcely have been proper, when Leo is your suitor and almost your bridegroom."

"Who told you so, uncle?"

"Leo himself, you little hypocrite! Why not trust your uncle, who brought Leo here for that very purpose? I shall be so happy to join your hands!"

"Uncle," Drusilla began, with an earnest accent, "Leo told you an untruth. We have never said a word upon the subject. He may love me, but he has never told me so."

Drusilla sat still without remarking that her uncle had left the room on tiptoe. When he returned he only opened the door to push Leo into the room: then he shut himself out again.

Leo flew to his cousin's couch, and threw himself on his knees by her side.

"My uncle has told me that I might come to you and hear the words that make me happy for the rest of my life! Drusilla, you love me?"

Notwithstanding her weakness, Drusilla's cheeks became red. She opened her mouth for an indignant speech, but closed it again, and, after awhile, said:

"I am very sorry, Leo. I do *not* love you—nor ever shall."

Half an hour later Ruggiero's step moved falteringly on Drusilla's carpet. She had sent her uncle for him—he was to read to her. With a smile and a blush she received him, and answered his broken inquiry for her health by a shake of the hands and a bright look.

Not only that day did Ruggiero sit by her side in the balmy summer air that rose from the garden, heavily laden with the perfume of flowers and ripening fruit—but every day for many weeks coming. Sometimes the uncle occupied the arm-chair by Drusilla's side, and then gay talk sounded in the room, and the books remained closed. But very often Ruggiero was alone with the sweet patient, who looked more charming than ever in all the quilted white satin that surrounded her. Those were hard times for the young priest. Drusilla asked the most embarrassing questions. She spoke words that seemed irreverent to him, and yet had the sound of angels' voices.

One day he read in Dante's Inferno the glorious chapter on the eternity of love, which, stronger than every anguish they must endure, makes the two lovers Francesca and Paolo cling to each other even in the night of despair. Drusilla made Ruggiero a sign to pause for awhile. After long consideration, she said :

" Do you think that those two would have defied punishment had they known what it was to be like ? "

Ruggiero blushed crimson. He falteringly answered :

" I do not know. But I daresay that the knowledge of what awaited them would not have changed them."

" What makes you think so, Abbate ? "

Ruggiero replied with more faith in his eye than Drusilla had ever read there when he spoke of religious things :

" Because love is stronger than fear, Madonna."

" Because love is stronger than fear," the girl mused. " We will read no more to-day, Abbate, if you please. Tell me how you know that love is stronger than fear."

Ruggiero's heart was eager to speak out. Had not he disobeyed his superior and the holy oath of his order because he loved her ? But leaving *himself* aside, he told her a number of examples in history and in tradition where love had been victorious over fear, and other passions besides. She listened in rapt silence, but her face told that she was putting an especial meaning into every one of Ruggiero's words, that she was applying every example to a particular case.

When he ceased speaking she remained silent also. Ruggiero was distrustful of himself. With his look constantly fixed on Dante's book, he sat motionless, knowing that if he looked upon his darling he should be no longer brave. She bent towards him, and with a brilliant look in her still feverish eye, she asked :

" Do you think love can sunder *all* chains ? "

Whence came the courage with which the young priest answered :

" *All*, Madonna—save the Church's. The Church leaves its sons no choice but to die or to yield. Few have refused to do the latter by submitting to the former."

The young girl with the childish smile around her rosy lips looked as serious as any of the ancestral dames in the hall below. Time is not exactly the precise thing that our notions call it—with sixty minutes to an hour, and sixty seconds to a minute. It was as if years passed away over that fair bent head. Drusilla had not lived or thought as much in months before as she now did in little more than five minutes. When she looked up, a sad smile trembled on her lips. She took Ruggiero's hand, and said seriously, as though she were giving words to an old resolve :

" I have dreamed a long dream during my illness. My eyes were closed, so that I could not comprehend its right meaning. They are wide open now. I know what there is for me to do. I will

follow Sister Agnes's advice, and take the veil; for the world brings naught but disappointments with it!"

She threw herself back on her cushions, and covered her face with her hands.

All Ruggiero's blood boiled up. He rose, and letting his fist fall heavily upon the table, he said, in a voice subdued by passion:

"Madonna, you shall not—Drusilla, you must not become a nun! You little know the pangs that await you—the heavy monotony of life; the solitude, nay, sometimes hunger and thirst. Drusilla, I cannot tell you all I have suffered! Blind faith, which alone can console for all, was not my lot. I began to doubt, and with doubt came misery, despair. I have spent years, Madonna, that I defy torments to equal! And you think that I will let *you* meet a similar fate—you, you, whom I——"

Drusilla looked up with eager eyes—with a look that drew the words from Ruggiero's lips whether he would speak them or not. With his eyes riveted on hers, he murmured:

"Whom I love more than heaven!"

Forgetful of illness and weakness, Drusilla jumped up, and was at his side in a moment.

"I have made you say it," she whispered. "You cannot retract. If you love me, Ruggiero, you will throw your chains from you, and be mine!"

What were all the temptations of the saints to the one that tried Ruggiero at that moment! He held the sweet girl, who was his all, in his strong arms. He could fly with her, wherever he liked: she was ready to give up home and religion for him. He could be happy, happier than he had thought it possible for man to be. The struggle was long and painful—but Ruggiero triumphed. He carried her to her couch, and laying her upon it, he kneeled by her side and told her that—he could not!

"I cannot break my vow—I cannot be untrue to my promise. I should not be worthy of you, Drusilla, if I did."

Their interview was not at an end. Drusilla declared her intention of taking the veil, and nothing Ruggiero could say altered her mind. When she ceased saying so, she asked him if he preferred to see her married to her cousin. Ruggiero saw that she was in earnest. There was no other choice, for the will of the girl had suddenly awoke, and grew a giant on the important occasion. Ruggiero preferred to see her a nun to the fate awaiting her at Leo's side. He protested no longer.

The days that followed brought with them despair for both young lives. Ruggiero spent his nights in the chapel, and could not speak a word of prayer. He scarcely knew which was strongest in him—the joy at knowing that she loved him, or the pain of losing her, his own Drusilla.

With a pale face he entered Drusilla's room one morning and spoke

the farewell words. He could not impart his strength or his power of control to her—she fainted in his arms. But now that his resolve was taken, nothing could shake it. He laid her on her pillows, called her maidens, and only waiting to hear that she had returned to consciousness, he departed with a brisk step. He could not help feeling the difference between now and when he had seen the same road from Drusilla's pony-carriage, that bright morning in spring. He had scarcely nourished more hope then than now, and yet what a difference! Then, it is true, he did not possess her love—but now he had gained and lost her!

Bad conscience alone is not a disturber of sleep. Ruggiero lay awake through long nights, when sleep would have been such happiness, allowing him to forget his trouble for awhile. As it was, Drusilla's sweet voice sounded for ever in his ears, her lovely form was for ever present to his soul. Weary with the life he led, he fulfilled his duty with over-scrupulous fidelity. One evening he crossed the convent's corridor, and entered the church, where but a few women were still kneeling in unfeigned devotion. He entered a confessional, knowing that some of the poor creatures were sure to be in need of the priest's consoling words. A dark figure rose in one of the corners near the high altar, and whispering something to her companion, she walked with a weary step towards the confessional, which she must have seen the priest enter. She knelt down again, and hiding her face in her hands, sobbed bitterly. Ruggiero, whose heart ached more than ever, was near tears himself, but it was his duty to administer consolation, so he began to say in a whisper:

"Let me hear what distresses you. Perhaps religion has some balm for your wounds!"

Amid sobs a soft voice answered:

"The Church is itself the cause of my misery. I can hope nothing from it, and yet I have no other resting-place on earth, and must needs come to it."

Ruggiero had immediately recognised the voice of his beloved, and quite sure that if he spoke he must betray himself, he waited in silence for her further words, which, though they made him unhappier than ever, still thrilled through him, and gave him a vague sense of delight. He was not aware that Drusilla would not have approached the confessional had she not recognised his figure as he glided into it. It was to hear his dear voice once more that she knelt there, trembling and sobbing like a passionate child.

The long pause that ensued might have told him all. Less his wish to remain unknown than the ardent desire to hear her voice again made him say:

"Tell me, Madonna." Drusilla could contain herself no longer.

"Ruggiero!" she sobbed out, and then in so soft a whisper, only a lover's ears could distinguish the words, all the endearing terms which

her child's heart dictated, mingled with the tale of the sorrow she had endured for weeks past. Ruggiero leaned back half unconscious. When she ceased speaking, he felt faint and heartsick, from the effort of gaining mastery over a body which would have burst open the door of the confessional and borne that sweet kneeling figure away in its arms. She knew why he was silent, and she improved the occasion by asking him in passionate terms to meet her there every evening for the short time she still remained outside the walls of a cloister. He could not refuse her, for it was his own heart's wish she expressed. Besides, what danger could come to him or her, whom the chains of the Church held fast?

Thus the lovers met daily, and for an hour could converse on the past, leaving the desolate present and the hopeless future aside. They were never suspected. As the winter approached the afternoons grew shorter, the dark set in earlier, and the lovers' chances of being together improved. Drusilla mustered up her courage one day to tell Ruggiero that on Christmas-eve she would enter the convent, which, it is true, was situated but a few streets distant from Santa Philomena, but whose doors, once they had closed behind Drusilla, would part them as the grave alone can. They could no longer speak hopefully; despair counted the days still remaining, as though a death warrant awaited them at the end. One evening Drusilla came later than usual. She could scarcely walk to the confessional, and sobbed out to Ruggiero that her uncle had in a letter declared that he did not give his consent to her taking the veil, and would never again see her, if she persevered in her purpose. The young man clenched his fist, and with an angry movement unconsciously tore the texture of his priest's gown. He could not protect and cherish this poor young thing, whom all the world left lonesome. After having vented her grief in tears, Drusilla at last said:

"If I could but feel your hand in mine once more, if I could but look into your eyes, I should enter the convent with a lighter heart. I strain my eyes every evening, and yet I see nothing—nothing of you!"

It was what he himself had been wishing for months—to hold her in his arms once more, as on that day when she had drawn the confession of his love from him—then part for ever.

He asked her to stay in the church some time longer, then to pass through a side door into the arched square where the monks of Santa Philomena, who had lived and died here, reposed: some under the vaulted passages, others under the grass, which covered every distinction between their tombstones. This place was sometimes visited by persons seeking quiet for their pious prayer, but it was usually solitary.

Drusilla left her maid in the church and passed noiselessly down the few steps beyond the door, her heavy black dress trailing after her. She had thrown her veil over her face, and crossed one side

of the square with an unsteady step. But four lights excluded darkness, and they were hanging each to a centre column of the four vaults, lighting up some marble sculptures, mostly representing dead monks with haggard faces, and leaving all else around to darkness. Drusilla started as an arm passed softly round her waist and drew her onward, but she was reassured by a voice, choked with emotion, which tried to say:

"This is more than I had dared demand of life!"

How could those two young beings be so very, very happy, as the light in their eyes proved them to be? It was an hour, and a place, and a situation that would make most young girls, brought up as Drusilla had been, shudder with fear. Yet what scene does not lose all its horror in the eyes of a girl when she may lean on the arm of her lover? They passed but rarely under the light in the vault—darkness around them at most times, hiding them to view, when they would have been well worth seeing, as they clung to each other, as if it had been for life. For awhile they forgot all save the sweetness of the hour. Then Ruggiero's heart felt a pang that recalled him to the present and its dangers. He asked Drusilla:

"Which day do you enter your prison?"

"This day week." She could scarcely falter as she clung to him tighter. She had nearly forgotten her fate.

"And we might have been so happy!" he sighed.

Drusilla pained him by saying: "If you had but dared! I have been told that there are thousands, nay millions, who revere the same God as we do, and believe in the same Saviour, who would not think the less of you if you shook off your bonds! We could live in Switzerland or England without a shadow of blame on our lives, if by our deeds we make them noble."

"Would you leave your home, Drusilla, for a strange land?"

"With you a thousand times! Your eyes are my heaven. If I have them I cannot turn home-sick. But do not let me make you unhappy. What is the use ——"

"We are in the hands of God, Drusilla. Those who have once entrusted themselves to His care must not turn back or repent."

"If He be what you have taught me to believe Him—He would not sever us. Oh, Ruggiero, I feel that my happiness with you would be worth all the saints' ecstasy in their solitary cells."

Drusilla stood opposite the lamp, whose light shone full upon her. Had she nourished one hope of still winning him when she came hither? She looked so beautiful, so child-like in her black garments, that clung to her like a fated attire. Ruggiero looked upon her in silence as he stood opposite her. With a charming movement she leaned far back to the wall, touching the feet of a stone monk with her soft veiled hair—then she stretched both hands towards him, with a loving, supplicating look that thrilled him, and said plainer than words:

"Do not forsake me!"

Ruggiero gazed steadfastly upon her, and if he did not take her hands it was because his whole faculties were centred in his eyes. What at first seemed an effect of the flickering, unsteady light, became a fact. The wall behind Drusilla moved. The marble plate with the monk in relief upon it was slowly bending forward. Ruggiero gave one leap, encircled his darling's waist with one arm, and then spread out the other to keep the marble slab from falling. It was three feet from the ground, and must call the whole convent to the spot if it fell—and betray the lovers.

Drusilla had comprehended and stood behind Ruggiero, eager to help him if his strength proved inefficient in retaining the heavy marble plate. But Ruggiero's arm was strong as a young athlete's. Seeing that he could not fasten the tomb-plate in its place, he resolved to let it slide gradually to the ground, where it now alighted, without noise. But what ailed the lovers as they stood there, both pale as death?

The convent had revealed its secrets to them. Behind the marble tombstone was an empty space, and there crouched, as though they had been buried but yesterday, two of God's young creatures whom death could not sever. He, a young man in armour, with a vigorous form, his arm entwined round his companion—his long hair falling in fair locks on to her young bosom. She, a slender, youthful maiden—her head resting upon his bosom, both arms clinging to his neck—her light form in a nun's dress. They both gave so imposing a picture of what love can endure—of what love has endured—that the hearts of our two lookers-on trembled within them. Ruggiero was the first to move.

"Do you understand what these two tell us, in language too pathetic for a human heart?"

Drusilla's eyes lost their haggard look. She threw herself upon her lover's breast.

"You see the Church retains unwilling sons and daughters!"

"It shall not do so again, Drusilla. It shall not retain you or me. Let us go. No one will miss me, and when to-morrow they find these two they will tell them plainly *why* we fled. They will not dare to follow us."

He carried her to the church doorsteps, sustained her into the dark vaults once more. She beckoned to her maid, and left the dismal old building—which must centuries ago have heard the death-cry of those two lovers, and had not betrayed it—for her home. Ruggiero never left her side, and when the morning dawned they both looked upon a scene which had none of Verona's dismal walls even in the background. They fled: happy notwithstanding surrounding dangers; notwithstanding the picture of misery which rose before their eyes so often—which had been the cause of all their happiness.

Early the next morning mysterious rumours spread about the city of Verona. Sister Agnes had been still asleep when the young couple turned their steps towards happier regions. Her slumbers were broken by the announcement of a visit from the superior of Ruggiero's convent—while the servant at the same time gasped forth the news that the young countess and her maid had left the house before the dawn of day, and no one knew whither she had gone. The nun was so frightened that she ordered the superior to be introduced into her room before she rose from her bed. He told her that Ruggiero too was missing, and after severely reproving her for taking such indifferent care of the bird which had escaped them, he entrusted the secret of the grave in the vault to her. The superior had made his mind up to follow the fugitives, and to bring them back at what cost he might.

Ruggiero was quieting his fluttering bird by telling her over and over again that he had telegraphed to her uncle, who would meet them at the station, and conduct her safely to his house. But Drusilla was more frightened about her lover than about herself. She saw the hosts of monks grasping him, and not releasing him again. Sometimes she forgot her grief, and laughing merrily, never ceased to admire the young man who sat opposite to her—so handsome and stately in the garments that he had exchanged for the monk's gown.

When they had told all, Drusilla's uncle had not the heart to refuse his consent—he undertook to protect them, and did so in a gentlemanly and effective manner.

The day had not run to its close when the superior of the convent of Santa Philomena was announced in the palace of Drusilla's uncle. He was ushered into the library, an immense apartment, which awed even the monk, who was not unaccustomed to palatial dimensions. The old gentleman received him kindly, but apparently without a notion of what the purpose of the holy father's visit could be. The priest told in hard terms of one of his dependent's disobedience, and asked the old gentleman to give the truant up to his rightful superior. The gentleman courteously replied:

"You ask more of me than I can comply with. I know nothing of your dependent, except that he was once the teacher of my niece, who I hear is foolish enough to wish to enter a convent, whilst she might be the light of my eyes and the cherished wife of any man she pleases."

"Then they are not with you! I have followed a false track and must turn back and begin afresh."

The priest rose and was about to go, when the gentleman, suddenly detaining him, began slowly, as though an idea had just struck him:

"I had intended paying you a visit the very next time I went to Verona. You will allow me to speak of the matter in my mind here. I found some old documents in my niece's library which highly interested me, and which, I believe, may be of interest to you

also. Some three hundred years ago a younger son of the house of the Portalupi, it is said, loved a young lady whose name is not mentioned in the documents, but who sprang from one of the best families of Verona. By a selfish vow of her mother's she was doomed to enter a convent; and, as nothing the young lovers could do succeeded in changing her fate, she obeyed and took the veil in the convent of Santa Philomena, which was then, as you know, a nunnery. The desperate young lover would not be consoled by his family, but determined to join the army, and to lend his strong arm to his country, since he could not be happy at home. With a single servant he left the palace of the Portalupi one night, dressed in armour and riding his best horse, and was seen no more. The servant returned a few days later, and told his master that the young knight had bidden him wait in a narrow lane, near the convent of Santa Philomena, and had returned no more. The family believed him to have joined the army alone, and sent his servant after him, but he never could be found. The army lists do not contain his name. There is nowhere a word or record of him, as either alive or dead. What do *you* think, holy father, became of him?"

The priest, upon this question being suddenly put to him, turned to ashy paleness, and found no answer. The gentleman continued:

"What I wish you to do is this. Look into the library of your convent, and see if the secret documents contain no clue to the disappearance of a young knight in armour. Something might have happened to him in the convent, you know, and I should be so glad to have light thrown upon this dark affair. And now I will detain you no longer. Should I chance to hear anything of your runaway brother I will not fail to send you word."

Bowing him out, the old gentleman could not refrain from smiling. He returned to the room where he had left the young fugitives sitting with their faces lighted up by smiles, on a low settee near an old-fashioned chimney, where a large log of wood burned brightly.

Not three months later the monk and would-be nun were man and wife. Drusilla's uncle would not say by what means he had made the Church's persecution cease. He was so happy in the grateful smiles they bestowed upon him that he hurried the preparations for their marriage, and would not rest until they were blessed.

He who once was Abbate Ruggiero is now a grand seigneur, who, with a proud face, drives the sweetest young wife, in the most sumptuous of equipages, past Rome's monumental buildings. At the Pincio they meet an old gentleman on horseback, who rides up to them and asks news of a fine little fellow in a cradle at home, who does not know what little chance of life he had some years ago. Sister Agnes is not this child's guardian. She has retired to the convent whence she came twenty years ago to darken Drusilla's now sunny life.

THE ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood, Author of "Through Holland."

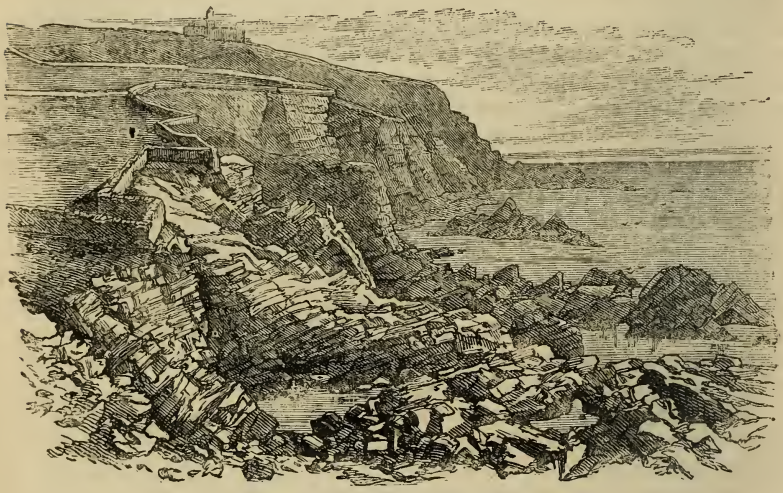
I LEFT Kirkwall for Shetland one Saturday morning. The day was bright and sunny, and all the world foretold a smooth passage. Once more all the world was wrong. The journey between the two archipelagos is often typical of the voyage of life: that vale of tears where each has to take the rough with the smooth, whether he will or no, and bear it with becoming fortitude: never telling where the shoe pinches; carefully concealing his skeleton in a well-closed closet; and assuming before his fellows a cheerful countenance and a merry heart. And this is as it should be: or would the world around us and at large be grave and sombre as mutes at a funeral, and our little stage become a typical churchyard: for it is certain that to one and all the shoe pinches somewhere.

The boat started at noon. She had come into Kirkwall at ten o'clock, discharged some of her cargo and cattle, landed sundry passengers and taken in others, stayed a couple of hours (a great portion of which seemed to be taken up in ringing a furious bell as an intimation that time was up), and departed again. The smooth passage of prophecy was rough in the fulfilment. The boat was again the *St. Magnus*, which must have made more martyrs than the Pagan church. Never was a boat so uncomfortable in its internal arrangements and the planning of its berths. Once more it was crowded with passengers, and once more the Scotch drovers made themselves a torment. It cannot be too clearly repeated that the Company are bound as speedily as possible to set right this disgraceful nuisance: the more so that the remedy is perfectly easy and at hand.

We left Kirkwall bound for Lerwick, the chief town or capital of the mainland of Shetland. As we receded from the harbour the town stood out in all its dull gloom, looking more than ever forlorn and deserted in contrast with the brilliant sky, the liquid, transparent water, the animated birds whirling around with wild clang. Beyond uprose the cathedral, a refuge for thought and attention whether in or out of the town; one of the last points, as it was the best, visible as we wandered on the "wide waste of waters" away from the little capital. My sojourn had been somewhat of disappointment—what else was possible with an incessant weeping and wailing of the elements?—and I wondered whether Shetland would prove a happier experience. At least I should have a better foothold in the place, for I was to take up my abode in a friend's lodgings: a more suggestive prospect than the unquiet of an inn: though there had been

little to complain of in the Kirkwall Hotel, and a good deal to praise.

We passed away from the islands. It was an eight hours' passage, so that we were due at Lerwick at eight at night. And here it may be mentioned, for the benefit of the unwise, that the *w* in Lerwick receives its full claims to pronunciation. The word is spoken with the two distinct syllables—Ler-wick: and not Lerrick, as I had generally heard it called until I visited these latitudes. The word wick, as many readers will know, signifies an open or exposed bay: but the origin of the word Lerwick has never been satisfactorily settled. It is supposed by some to take its name from Larwick, a small town near the Naze of Norway. Lerwick seems to have sprung into existence about the year 1670.

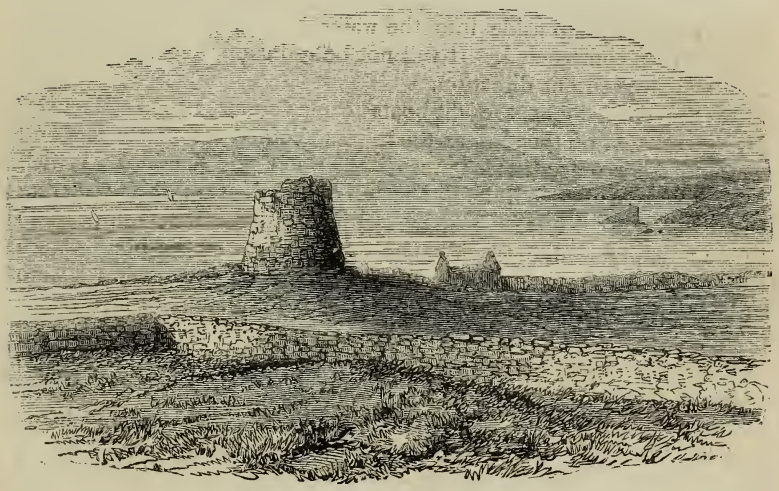


SUMBURGH HEAD, SHETLAND.

After we had left Kirkwall, the day soon clouded over; the sea became rough and unpleasant; the boat rolled and pitched in a horrible manner. Half way across, we passed Fair Isle: a small island that acts as a link between Orkney and Shetland, yet is more inaccessible than any island of the two groups. It rose almost perpendicularly out of the water to a considerable height: a lonely isle indeed. It is so difficult to land that this cannot be attempted in rough weather. For weeks at a time the inhabitants are cut off from all communication with the outer world. In calm water, when the steamer is sighted on her way from Orkney to Shetland, some of the men put off in boats, come alongside, and beg for newspapers and magazines: a practice less followed up now than it was a few years ago, when travellers were rare, and the advantages and facilities of the post of less frequent occurrence. The

island contains some two or three hundred inhabitants, amongst the most primitive and genuine of all the many islands. There is no resident minister, and the children are baptized in batches whenever one may chance to visit the island—a high day and holiday of strange advent. Marriages may be performed by the schoolmaster, in a civil kind of way; but the minister, who on his visit baptizes a crop of infants, frequently celebrates a second marriage to satisfy the scruples and tender consciences of sundry happy couples. May not Fair Isle be called a sixth division of the globe?

The island, rising out of the sea, looked a bright spot as we passed it: a solid rock of defence. The water dashed up to the foot of the craggs, and kept up an eternal plash that the people never hear, doubtless because they hear it always. The rains and the winds



BURGH OR CASTLE OF MOUSA.

beat upon the towering rocks, and the mists rise up and conceal it ever and anon; but it bids all defiance, and stands there a fortress of the ages, firm and sure.

Our boat ploughed onwards, and Fair Isle was left behind. The hours went on, and twilight gave place to darkness. In darkness and rolling the ship made way, and Sumburgh Head, the beginning of Shetland, was passed, and Mousa Island, and in due time Bressay lighthouse, at the entrance to Lerwick harbour. Suddenly, when it was nearer ten o'clock than nine, we entered into calm water, and most of the passengers crowded on deck. As the steamer dropped anchor with a rattling of chains, a gun boomed forth from her decks: signal to the people of Lerwick that passengers and mails were about to land. We were in the harbour and Sound: land-locked on all sides, as far as could be seen in the dark night.

The scene was weird and strange. Somewhere or other there lurked a feeling of being entirely separated from mankind and the civilised world. Communication with Shetland is less frequent than with Orkney. There a daily mail comes into Stromness, but in Shetland you have it but twice a week, and this only in summer. In winter, when seas are rough, and passengers are few, and cargo is scanty, the steamers and the mails go to Lerwick only once a week.

A scene weird and unusual. On the dark water a number of boats —called flit-boats—were quickly approaching from the shore, and crowded round the steamer. This is the only mode of landing the passengers, for Lerwick has no pier: It is eminently disagreeable. Fine or rain, ill or well, you have to look after your luggage, collect it together, grope down the ladder, and jump into a fast-filling boat; or, it may be, jump aside into the water. It is said that a pier is about to be constructed. It will not be too soon, and will certainly be a step in the right direction.

In the dark night the flit-boats came about us like locusts. Uprose a babel of tongues as the rowers shouted for passengers and contended for precedence. Across the water the lights of Lerwick gleamed and gloomed, and reflected themselves in thin wavering streaks on the dark water, and looked mysterious. It was impossible to see anything of the town. The very outlines of the houses were lost. There was nothing but these lights to indicate that we were near any place possessing local habitations and a name of mysterious origin.

A boatman was to come off to meet me, and on shouting out his name, a cheery "Ay, ay, sir!" came back in answer. A few moments and I was on the dark water, rowing away from the boats and the people to a landing-place near to my friend's lodgings. A happy chance, these lodgings. Never had I felt more in need of a night's rest and solitude. Never so thankful to shake off a boat and its associations: not even on the day I had reached Kirkwall after the passage from Aberdeen. But for this friendly harbour of refuge, neither rest nor solitude would have been found that night. Lerwick is not so expanding as Kirkwall, and the place was full. The passengers who went to the hotel were put as many as three, four, and five in a bedroom, friends and strangers, known and unknown alike. This is a Shetland and Orkney custom, and often has to be endured unless you are willing to take the alternative of sitting up all night. You are at the mercy not only of a very independent people, but of a people whose resources are limited. Remonstrance is useless. You cannot take the next train onwards or homewards, for there is no train, and no "onwards," and you must stay where you are, at least until the next outgoing steamer. Luckily such unpleasant experience was never mine, yet it must have been that night, but for my friend's thrice blessed, thrice welcome quarters. Most of the boats

went one way, and we went another, and I was right glad to put my foot on land. Lerwick was in darkness and gloom.

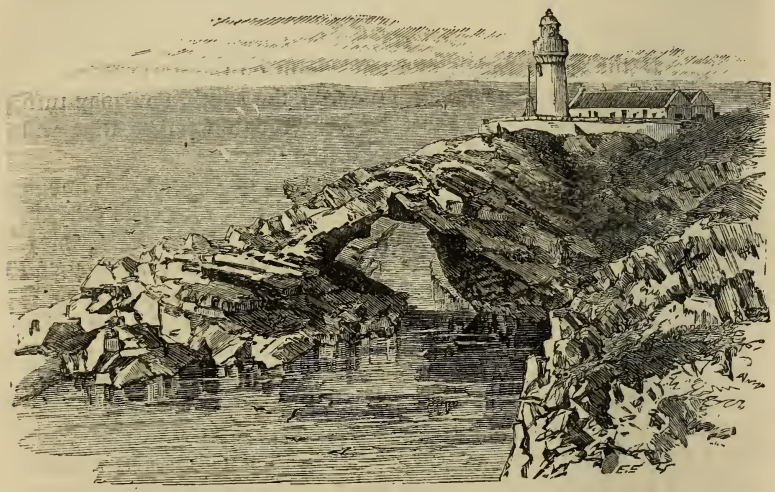
The next morning the scene in front disclosed itself at once as interesting and picturesque. Before us was Bressay Sound, the large sheet of water forming the harbour. On the opposite side, a mile across, rose the island of Bressay, which closes in the water on the west side, as Lerwick does on the east, and helps to form one of the finest natural harbours to be seen. Here boats ride at anchor perfectly protected, whilst, outside, the sea may be raging and boiling and dashing itself against the bold rocks. Not that it is never rough in the harbour; that would be impossible in so extensive a sheet of water. It is rough enough sometimes to render crossing from Lerwick to Bressay in a small boat dangerous, and sometimes impossible. Lerwick harbour has two entrances, north and south, a fact of especial use to anyone staying in Lerwick for boating and fishing. If the sea is rough and unpleasant on the north side, you have only to steer south; and if rough on the south, you may turn your boat northwards. It must be very rough weather that will prevent you from sailing out one way or the other.

The history of Shetland is very much that of Orkney. Though the two groups of islands disclaim any connection with each other in the present, they are closely linked together in the past. Orkney, perhaps, took the lead, and was the scene of greater activity and importance. Shetland is the Ultima Thule of the ancients, or is supposed to have been, which in history often comes to the same thing: especially in these days, when men of a restless and radical turn of mind hunt up old documents and peer into dim archives to contradict long undisputed facts. Thus it is possible that we shall presently discover that Mary Stuart was never executed, and Mary Tudor was a firm Protestant, and Elizabeth did not patronise red hair and black teeth, and Queen Anne was a woman of genius. Several passages in Virgil refer to Ultima Thule, and the title is recognised and used by other ancient writers.

Shetland has no separate history from Orkney. It is less favoured in some respects, and possesses less traces of a past importance. Thus it has no cathedral in which you may take sanctuary for a brief spell from the more commonplace surroundings; but it has remains of antiquities in a state more or less perfect. There are the remains of the burgh or castle on the small island of Mousa, where Harold took refuge when he pursued his mother Margaret, and Erlend, from Orkney. These burghs, as they are called, are the oldest monuments in the island, and that on Mousa is the most perfect. It has, from a distance, the appearance of a low round tower, is built of dry stone walls of immense strength, and commands the position it seems destined to protect. Such perfect Pictish or other remains as Maeshowe or the Standing Stones of Stennis in Orkney, do not exist in Shetland. The burghs are

numerous and seem to have been so placed as to keep up a constant communication with each other: thus linking the islands, and the different parts of each separate island, together.

But if Orkney plays a somewhat prominent part in the history of the past, Shetland possesses many advantages in the present. A glance at Lerwick the day after my arrival showed that it bore a strong resemblance to Stromness in Orkney. They are all very much alike, the principal towns in these islands; all built on the edge of the water, the ground rising up behind them; the houses all of the same dull grey granite stone; all consisting of one long, irregular street, all angles and abutments, with sundry narrow off-shoots in the shape of narrow courts and alleys that lead away from the town, and land you amidst newer houses that are beginning to



Bressay Lighthouse, at the entrance to Lerwick Harbour.

struggle into number. The town of Lerwick is almost the ugliest of all, but its situation is far before Kirkwall or Stromness. Its surroundings, estimating things by comparison, are beautiful. Its fine natural harbour; the opposite and surrounding islands; the wavy undulations of the land on all sides; and beyond and above all this, the magnificent rock scenery that lies in all directions when once you are out of the Sound. Orkney, for its rock scenery, cannot be compared with Shetland. I know not what coast would stand the test of comparison. We hear much of the rocks of North and South Cornwall, and of Devonshire; the beauties of Ilfracombe and its neighbourhood; but nothing of all this ever impressed me to anything like the same extent as the rocks of Shetland.

As in Orkney, so in Shetland, no trees are to be seen. The eye

may wander where it will, and find no shade from the summer heat, no wayside refuge from the stormy blast. Long lines of undulations, here rough and abrupt, there waving and continuous, cleave the sky; great tracks of barren and uncultivated land on all sides. In this, Shetland is very different from Orkney. There you have semi-cultivation: not smiling plains and rich cornfields, but plains and fields that would be smiling and rich if they could, and attempt it. In Shetland very little cultivation is visible. Consequently a solemn gloom and certain grandeur is more apparent; the idea and aspect of intense solitude are much heightened; a feeling of the utmost repose, though joined to a slight suspicion of monotony. Long stretches of moorland with rich blooms that blend wonderfully with the blue sky and the white floating clouds. Hills and hollows

Town Hall, Lerwick.

undulate around all covered with the rich purple gorse that shelters the scanty amount of game, that here forms the sole delight and resource of the sportsman. You may wander over many and many a mile of hill and dale, and plunge through the gorse, and now and then get swamped in a morass, and sometimes for your reward come home at night with your bag full, and sometimes return empty-handed. And you may roam from early morning to the fast gathering shades, when the birds have gone to roost and are too cunningly nested to be seen or disturbed, and by chance never meet a soul. Mile after mile of solitary moorland, and no one to exchange a word with; no sound to break the silence save the popping of your own gun, or the shrill clang of a gull winging its flight across the island, watching your every motion with its keen little eyes, and keeping wisely and well out of shot.

Or suddenly a raven starts across your path with a hoarse croak, and spreading his strong black wings, looks a magnificent creature as he tries to escape. But you are ready for any surprise, and before he is out of range, down he comes, and turning over and over falls with a dull thud upon the earth, that knocks the remaining life and breath out of him, and terminates his wild career. But it must be a bad day's sport that permits you to drop upon the fine fellow; sad want of a shot at *something*, or perhaps the necessity of discharging a barrel; for gulls and ravens are scarcely legitimate prey, unless wanted for such purposes as mounting or winging.

All this heathery moorland in autumn turns to a rich brown in the process of fading, and in every direction the tints of a declining year meet the eye. In your walks you notice, from the brow of a hill, how harmoniously this purple or brown heather blends with the sea —for there the sea is. You cannot, at any time, get very far away from it in these islands; if you are turning your back upon it in one direction it is only to meet it in another; there it ever is, calm and placid, and of exquisite tints, or restless and raging, according to its mood. And its mood on one side or the other is, more often than not, angry and disturbed: so that the waves beat themselves against the rocks with a noise of thunder, and whirl and seethe around the skerries, and rush into the caverns as if they would shake their very foundations. Woe betide the craft that at such times ventures too near shore.

But on a bracing, breezy day, with plenty of sun to gild the sky and water, and tip the gorse with gold, from these hills how clear and sweet the air. Around you nothing but solitude, nothing but earth and sea and sky: "le grand air," as the French happily put it, in an untranslatable expression. Who can render "le grand monarque" into its equivalent, its perfect meaning? And here in Shetland all this wealth of nature and colouring seems to have been made for you, and for you alone. The whole earth, sea, and air are yours, to breathe and revel in with a full sense of keen enjoyment. Every nerve in the body responds to the appeal; drinks in the almost intoxicating, almost fragrant breeze. Each day the brain and the sinews seem to gain fresh tone and strength, to return home like a giant refreshed. Metaphorically speaking, as few of us, alas, are gifted with giant brains. There is no time for solid development in these fast days. Once upon a time intellect reached its full maturity with due deliberation—like the aloe that takes a hundred years to blossom: it was a matter of "precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little:" but in these later days—*latter* days, as some people would have it written—our development is of that rapid kind that, like the candle burnt at both ends, it dies out ere its task of lighting and enlightening the world has been accomplished.

It is certain that he who burns the candle at both ends, or consumes the midnight oil, cannot do better than go up to Shetland to

recruit. He will spend his days out of doors, tramping over moors, or over well-made roads, with an amusement that at once commands the attention, yet rests and invigorates the brain in a marvellous manner. And on land he may vary his occupation by fishing, if he loves the pastime. There are many well-stocked fresh water lakes with abundance of trout that, in some seasons, and, indeed, as a rule, yield excellent sport. Or if at any time weary of the mainland, he may take passage in the little steamer that goes up to the North Isles, and landing at Unst, the most northern of all, find himself at the very Ultima Thule of civilised boundaries, if not much beyond the line, and enjoy there still better fishing than in the lakes of the mainland. It need not be said that to endure the discomforts, the roughing-it-in-the-bush kind of life of Unst, a man must be an adept in the art of fishing; his whole heart must be in his work; he must thoroughly understand his craft. The delicate manipulation of the flies, the patience required to make and replace those you lose by chance or accident; for the stock, in some way or other, is always diminishing, and one hardly knows how—like the pins that are always disappearing, nobody knows where, or the unpleasant people that are always turning up at the wrong time, nobody knows why He must know that a certain fly will only do for a certain fish, and a certain tint for a certain greyness or brightness of sky. A true disciple of Isaak Walton will learn all this, not only by practice, but by instinct; almost more, indeed, by instinct than practice. Some men become fishermen as if they were born to it: they fit into the groove as though it had been made for them, whilst others will never be good at the sport with all the trying and striving in the world. The latter would do well to turn to shooting, or to deep sea fishing, for this last requires more patience than skill, and the result is closely allied to the doctrine of chances. I have been out at sea for hours, and caught nothing; and again, I have thrown in a line with a score of hooks, and in two minutes have drawn up a good fish for every bait.

I have said that in Unst you have to rough it, and that to a great degree. Indeed, unless you have secured a room, or happen to know anyone who will put you up—such, for instance, as the minister—the chances are that you will have to sleep on board the little steamer, and go back to Lerwick on her return journey. There is scant accommodation in Unst, and during the season as many men go up there to fish as can possibly find resting-place: a shake-down, on which to vary the perpendicular position they have delighted in all day. For men—so inconsistent are we—will take any amount of trouble and hard work for amusement that they would never dream of enduring in a matter of duty. A certain friend living in a country village was once in the habit of going out into the road and breaking stones for his pleasure. Had it suddenly become a matter of necessity to him, how long would the enjoyment have lasted? So

much are we the creatures of fancy and imagination. Our pleasures frequently depend upon a certain peculiarity of temperament so subtle and imaginative that it may be likened to the delicate colour of certain flowers, that, with nightfall, ceases to exist because unseen. In like manner, to take a somewhat less refined example, a smoker will tell you that if it is too dark to see the smoke coming out of his mouth, all enjoyment of his pipe is at an end.

> So with the fragrant weed the smoker's fancy blends :
> When darkness veils the smoke, in smoke enjoyment ends.

But in every part of the Shetland Islands, including the little capital, the traveller must expect to rough it more or less. Life here is not a bed of roses : soft couches and luxurious chambers are happily unknown. It is a very different life from that of refined and fashionable haunts. A life more hardy, more bracing, morally and physically, than will be found within sight of Hyde Park or Piccadilly. All they who cannot do without these luxuries, and the delicacies of the table, must either refrain from going, or take them with them. But there are certain things that are not precisely luxuries, yet make weight and add considerably to the merits of a breakfast or dinner-table, that a man may carry up with him and be none the worse for—such as a flitch of bacon and a Stilton cheese : unknown commodities in Shetland. That is, if he is going up to lodgings. At an inn you are naturally at the mercy of your host, and must take such fare as he will provide. For in Lerwick you cannot write out your own daily menu. It will probably chance that the things on which you have set your affections are one and all not forthcoming. Thus, if you wish for beef, mutton will surely be in the market; and if you ask for fish you will probably find it a thing of yesterday or to-morrow.

Fish is not to be had in great variety in Shetland. Herrings abound, and when plentiful need not be bargained for. Twelve and even twenty may be bought for a penny. Fresh from the sea and well-cooked, you will not meet with a greater delicacy in the islands. There are also mackerel and cod-fish, but turbot is scarce. Meat is not very good or fine. Our landlady would occasionally bring up a sirloin of beef for dinner that was just enough for two, and nothing over but the bones. So with a leg or shoulder of mutton. The meat was very sweet in flavour, but, from its smallness, possessed no great amount of nourishment. It is therefore not altogether a land rich in marrow and fatness, or flowing with milk and honey. And this reminds me that milk was both dear and difficult to procure. Many a morning at ten o'clock we had either still to wait for breakfast, or take our coffee without milk. There is no regular dairy in or near the town. To bacon and Stilton cheese, add tins of condensed milk.

You may live very healthily and economically in Lerwick provided you take lodgings. The inns, though not possessing exactly the

comforts and refinements of a metropolitan hotel, do not exercise a precisely similar moderation in their charges. Perhaps it cannot be expected of them. Lodgings are excessively scarce, and the inns as a rule are the only refuge for the destitute. Lerwick has not enlarged and expanded after the manner of our popular watering-places. It would scarcely pay to build houses for that purpose: at least the conclusion appears to be justified by the fact: and the inhabitants in a general way have only such accommodation as their own domestic arrangements require. Such lodgings as exist are of the humblest description and are only to be put up with because better cannot be found. Nevertheless, in a very short time you cease to care for the luxuries you have left behind you: the soft carpets and downy cushions, the objects of art and virtu, that may or may not decorate the walls, the nooks and crannies, of the little local habitation each one calls home. Your life and enjoyment and occupation in Shetland must depend upon something quite outside these habits and influences: and luckily upon things that are in themselves more healthily attractive. After a long day spent out in the open air, tramping over mile after mile of hill and moorland with a gun over one shoulder and a game-bag over the other—for you must be your own keeper—or after standing many hours in or out of the water, at the by no means inarduous task of fly-fishing, it will be strange if a cane-bottomed chair will not be as easy as a spring lounge, or a hard bed as productive of refreshing, uninterrupted sleep as the softest down that ever enervated the frame of man in this luxury-loving nineteenth century. Luxurious, indeed. Of one nation steeped in the vice there remains a name; of another a ruin; what in the end thereof will be the fate of favoured England?

The luxuries of Shetland are what some people would never dream of. One morning—I had been in Lerwick about ten days—our landlady brought up for breakfast a well-grilled bird. "She thought we might like a scorie by way of a change." In my ignorance, I knew not then the meaning of a scorie. Upon asking my friend opposite he replied with much clearness: "What is a scorie? —why—just a scorie." I concluded it was some kind of game peculiar to Shetland—and I had already discovered that dainties were rare and that nothing must be too rashly despised. It was very good; tender and delicate; and in the end I learned that it was nothing but a young sea-gull: a gull of the first year: when its feathers are yet gray, and it has not long used its wings. Most people would dislike the idea of eating a sea-gull: perhaps I should have done so in any other place than Shetland: I can only say that I returned to the charge another day, and without reluctance. It is a very eatable bird, without suspicion of fishiness, unless cooked when a little too old.

The Shetlanders will not, as a rule, eat these scories. They go farther and fare worse—much worse. Whilst despising scories

which are easily obtained, they will take a great deal of trouble to secure a young cormorant. They cook and eat these cormorants, which are coarse, impossible food to anyone but a Shetlander. They also make them into a soup which they think delicious: a strong, unctuous liquid that, from its appearance, must possess some of the more wholesome, though not agreeable qualities of cod-liver oil.

In Shetland as in Orkney, peat is largely used for fuel. Great tracts of land become mere peat-bogs that perhaps with care and drainage might give place to a more smiling vegetation: the waving stems and stalks of the coarser grains. But the aspect of the island gains in gloom and grandeur by remaining in its present pristine condition. And you do, in Shetland, gain this sense of grandeur, that Orkney has very much lost by its semi-cultivation. It is bolder in its outlines, and gives you an idea of much greater space and extent. Wildness and desolation are on all sides apparent: an intense rest and repose to the spirit, which revels in this strange and uncommon appearance, and enjoys it to the full. I know not what the ideas of the Shetlanders themselves may be: those present "lairds" who replace the old "udaller" of a century or two ago: probably they would like a little more life and animation, and a little less of the desolate and monotonous element: the mal-du-pays of the Montagnard is doubtless an unknown disease with them, when they exile themselves from their native hills and valleys and lochs. But to a sojourner for a time amongst these same hills and valleys, this wild and barren grandeur is the first and great attraction of the islands. The waving fields of grain referred to would destroy the present fine effect. Yet Shetland is not escaping the march of progress: and a future generation will probably see a great change therein.

The making and getting of peat gives occupation to a large number of men and women. A good deal of it is cut in the spring and dries during the summer. In some parts of the island (we are speaking of the mainland) large tracts are marked out into sections, and a section is given over to a man or woman, and what they can make of it becomes their own. Again with some it becomes an article of trade, and is probably lucrative. These tracts interfere with the growth of the heather. In the districts you see small mounds of black peat, and long rows of turf turned over in straight regular lines: and you may watch the men and women at work. Towards evening, when work is over, if you happen to be going that way, you will meet the women returning homewards, many of them walking one behind another like a string of turkeys. And in their sable appearance they are not unlike those unwise birds. Their dress is plain, and often poverty-stricken in appearance: and the forlorn look of the women is heightened by the universal practice of the Shetland women of throwing a shawl over their heads when they go out of doors, in place of the ordinary bonnet.

The women returning home from the peat fields are a picturesque

object. In the first place their appearance exactly blends and harmonises with the surrounding country. They partake of the gloom which characterizes the hills and valleys, and this adds much, though the reader may be unable to realise it, to their attraction. A fashionably-dressed woman would look almost out of place in these wild regions: the peat-women excite interest by their quaintness, and also give rise to a feeling of compassion by their meek aspect of endurance. One thought that strongly forces itself upon reflection at sight of them is the variety and inequality of human lots; far less unequal doubtless, to use a well-worn phrase, than man with limited vision is able to discover. Could we collect the links that form each life, connect them, and at one glance read the story they tell, mysteries would disappear, and most lives prove probably a tale of simple cause and effect. Although links in past generations might be required to make the story complete.

But the lives of these peat men and women are simple and uneventful enough. The chain is a very short one and the links are not scattered. They go forth to their daily work and return to their daily rest, and have no thoughts or ambitions beyond. Their aspect, I have said, is picturesque. They are of all ages, some young, others bending under the weight of years. There they go, one after another, with their baskets, or kishies, as they are called, fastened upon the back by means of a strap over each shoulder, rising above their heads, and piled up with squares of black peat. This naturally gives them all a stooping position, suggestive of hard work and feminine weakness, that quickly appeals to the sympathies. Many of them wear shoes made of cowhide, strong and cheap, perhaps, but without form, and with small pretensions to neatness and cleanliness. And these they often "save" by carrying them in their hands. Many, too, are without stockings, and they trudge along bare-footed and bare-legged, and only look in consequence the more poverty-stricken. Their petticoats are short, and generally of some dark, coarse material, with the colour of which the peat-getting sufficiently harmonises. Upon their heads they wear the inevitable kerchief of thick Shetland wool, generally grey, but sometimes red. Their faces are sunburnt and weather-beaten. Those of the old women are often strangely and wonderfully wrinkled, which with their bent attitude gives them a look of extreme age, and almost decrepitude. The younger women are many of them handsome: I saw a few really beautiful faces. As they go along the road nearly all are knitting stockings or some other article for wear. They appear to knit by instinct: an hereditary gift. Their heavy loads and somewhat difficult progress in no way seem to interfere with the flying needles. These never arrest their motion as their owners for a moment raise their heads as you pass, and wish you good day: or, it may be, turn round to look after the stranger or the gun—no doubt the gun.

This is the simple life of some of these people. In the capital itself there is, in a small way, bustle, excitement, and competition; yet, as far as I could discover, a feeling of cordiality and general good fellowship amongst themselves. It would be inconvenient for an insulated people to be always on the quarrelsome side of human nature. They cannot quietly pack up their goods and chattels and remove to the next town without first crossing the water and turning themselves into exiles. So they make a merit of necessity, and live peaceably together; each occupied with his own business rather than his neighbour's, whereby scandals and backbitings and the petty details of a provincial state of society are unknown. They work to some purpose, too, and accumulate fortunes. It is not uncommon to be told that the owner of that dingy and dismal-looking house, now coming out at his door, and looking rather pitiable in the way of garments, is the comfortable possessor of a little nest-egg of a hundred thousand pounds, scraped together by industry and economy. Amongst the more wealthy any attempt at fashion or display is carefully eschewed: and a coachman in livery or a page in buttons would be looked at as a strange production that had suddenly sprung up in the night like a mushroom, and might be expected to disappear as rapidly.

All this is very delightful by contrast, and for a change. Decidedly they have the best of it, these far off, simple-minded, hospitable Shetlanders; for are we not beginning to discover that it is better, individually and nationally, to err on the side of simplicity than to go to the opposite extreme? Without returning to the customs of Adam and Eve (or what would become of the silkworms and the tailors?), we should do well no doubt to go back to some of the less luxurious customs of our forefathers. This, however, is not likely to be. The tide of circumstance and progress is too strong to flow backwards. Apparently the rocks of mental and moral self-restraint have been swept away by the ever on-coming waters of destiny, and a receding and exalting era can only dawn with a decline of national prosperity—an evil of another kind.

So they who languish for the simple pleasures of life may go up to Shetland and find them there; but as good seldom comes without a mixture of evil, they must be content to renounce many things we now look upon as necessities: first and foremost the higher intellectual enjoyments of life. Yet these pages have little to do with this theme; after all, perhaps an unprofitable one, because unalterable. Their purpose is to endeavour to state things as they are, rather than to draw comparisons that must generally be more or less invidious. I have no space to enlarge upon other themes, which must be left to another paper.

LE CERCLE AUX DEMOISELLES.

IT is a trite saying that one half of the world is ignorant of how the other half lives. For which reason, and because it is always interesting to study, when we can, the hidden forces which are quietly working on our social fabric, we submit the few following extracts from the carefully kept diary of a young lady moving in polite society. How it came into our possession is not for us to say. Suffice it that we break no pledge and hurt no one's feelings by making it public.

Monday. We have started our "cercle." Diana is to be our president. Who so fit as Diana—our poetess! Taller than the majority of women, with her rich black hair, and eyes wandering and restless, yet flashing with an indescribable lustre when she has grasped her idea; clad, as she generally is in the evening, in her long black velvet dress, a veritable priestess. Our rules are to meet once a month to discuss arts, literature, politics, and science, as more particularly affecting woman's position and duties in life. After the discussion half an hour's reading from some solid book. Each member to read each month at the least three articles in the *Contemporary Review.* Sisters Beatrice and Hilda have joined; and Mary Butterworth, who is awfully clever, paints beautifully, knows algebra, and has read Paley, Gibbon, and Herbert Spencer, and all such books; and Fanny K., who has written something for a paper. In all we are ten; and I was elected—I, who never read, and know nothing: but I am so glad. I must and will read hard.

Wednesday. Our first discussion—subject, "Dress." We all think dress should be as simple as possible, and agree to dress as simply as possible ourselves. Should all the members of our "cercle" dress alike? suggests our president. Negatived, as the same colour would not suit all the members. Or, suggests sister B., shall we all wear some distinguishing badge, a ribbon, or locket, or charm, to show that we are a united "cercle," and to suggest constantly to our minds the standard of life we have adopted? After much discussion, negatived. There is just a chance of our arranging for all to do our hair the same way, with a pledge, of course, to wear no pads.

Mary B. read Tyndall's essay on miracles.

Wednesday. Read minutes of last meeting (this sounds grand). We have each read three articles in the *Contemporary* since last meeting. Subject, the "Neighbourhood." Carried unanimously that it would be the better for more meetings like ours. Question, should we admit more members to our "cercle:" no, because everyone is so frivolous. We repeat conversations heard at our last dance.

Fanny K. says she heard from a friend that the Miss Marplots said we dressed very badly? The Miss M.'s think of nothing but dress, and do not understand simplicity. Resolution proposed, that we do not imitate the neighbourhood in talking scandal, or in the rapidity of our conversations at dances; also that we must look outside the neighbourhood for the field of our work.

Reading from "Sartor Resartus."

Friday. Saw Cyril Harcourt at the Blatherbys' ball. We talked about simplicity in dress. Told him of our "cercle." He asked why we did not like simplicity in language: he supposed "cercle" meant club; why not say club? I told him it was from old association. We had all read a book where revolutionists met at cercles. He likes things done for association's sake. He says we ought to dress "in the fashion, but not of the fashion;" we must not be too "simple" (query, a pun meant) about our dress. A nun, he says, dresses simply, and yet you could pick her out amongst a thousand. You could never dance more than twice running with a nun; everyone would spot you.

Wednesday. Subject, "Marriage." We have all agreed to remain unmarried. There are plenty of girls only too glad to marry. We shall do more good as we are. Diana read us a poem of her own on marriage. We are all to read Tennyson's "Princess" carefully through before next meeting, and give our opinions on it then. One of the Marplot girls is just engaged to Charlie Q. He has not many brains: this is the general opinion. Mary B. danced with him once; he had never heard of Fichte! We read through the marriage service, Sisters B. and Hilda taking the different parts. Unanimously agreed that the wording of the wife's pledge is calculated to degrade the relation of woman towards man.

Tuesday. Fortnightly dance to-night. Very awkward! Cyril H. asked me what our last discussion was. I got very hot, and said, "Marriage." "And what did you carry unanimously?" he asked. "That none of us should ever marry." "Poor things," he muttered. I flared up, and said we were nothing of the sort: we had all thought about life, and that was our mature judgment. He said he referred to the men. I agreed with him there, for Diana and Sister B. would make splendid wives; how queenly they would look at the head of their tables. He said he was not thinking of them particularly.

Wednesday. Subject, "Woman's Duties." Diana was absent, staying at the Gilliflowers. M. B. in the chair. It is very curious, but we all believe that Diana is in love with Mr. Padusoy. He preaches at the Silver Street Chapel, and, though in the Church, is very unorthodox. He has lovely eyes and a divine voice. His sermons are very beautiful. I wish I could remember them all through the week. She has gone into town every Sunday for the last three months to hear him. It seems she sent him a copy of

her poems, and also asked for his advice, frankly telling him all he unorthodox views. He has sent back her poems with much praise, underlining what he approves of. We wonder what will come of it all. How nice! But then our resolution. Shall we ask her? No, we agree to wait at present, but one of us is to go each Sunday to Mr. Padusoy's chapel. Woman has a noble future. Fanny K. asks if we will help at some tea-drinkings in her father's poor parish; some of us to read, others to show the "wheel of life," &c. We agree. It will be very delightful. We shall be quite out of the neighbourhood. Her father is a very nice man, a Dissenter, and so not at all orthodox. Our opinion on the "Princess," that it has a very sad ending. These tea-drinkings may lead to work. We all long for real hard work. Read some of Kingsley's "Yeast."

Thursday. We had to go to the Harcourts to dinner. Sister B. and I were sent. I told Cyril of our intended tea-drinking work. He approves of it. "They do the same thing, though, in your own parish," he remarked. "Ah, but so differently. All the girls go for is to show off their dresses and flirt: not to look after the poor people." "Yes," he said, "you are right to leave your parish. It is the correct thing now. We all go to Thorleigh to church; all the Thorleigh people come here. No parish, I suppose, is a prophet in its own county." "You speak bitterly, Mr. Harcourt," I said. "No, only sarcastically. The great thing after all is to do something. Never mind if it is not done quite close home—it is better than doing nothing." I like Mr. Harcourt.

Wednesday. Subject, "Conversation," but we talked on various topics. Diana told us of a recent dinner-party talk. She got riled with old Mr. Botherby (our vicar) because he said something against Dissenters, and she said across the table that she loved Gladstone and Bright, and that disestablishment must soon come, and that apostolic succession was all humbug. Mr. Quaverly made it worse for her by saying, in loud apology, "Miss Diana doesn't really mean it." We gave Diana a special vote of thanks and condolence. In future we are to be very discreet in our talk; not to throw pearls before swine, as Mary B. said. Work is coming in now. The tea-drinking was so successful that it is to be repeated once a fortnight through the winter, and we are all to help. There is a talk of a school for girls in the poorest district, and some chance of a temperance public-house there. Hurrah for work!

Tuesday. Another fortnightly. Asked all my partners if they had read the last *Contemporary*. Nine had not: two had. Cyril H. one of the latter. He approves of temperance public-houses. Without clerical supervision? I ask. Certainly, he replied. We then discussed Communism and Mazzini, and afterwards John Stuart Mill. I regret I have not read more of him.

Wednesday. Another "cercle," so lovely, the cosey room, and the red firelight. We sit in the old nursery and make a half-circle

round the fireplace. Subject, "Belief." We had a long talk about many things. We seem all very sceptical. We don't believe in the vicar; he has such remarkable whims about the garden of Eden. We don't believe in our late governess's theory of history. We don't believe in all the Fathers. Resolved that we must beware of being sceptical without reason; that the attainment of truth must be our sole aim. Question raised, do we believe in ghosts? The evening was closing in then, and the firelight was flickering on the wall. We are not sure. Curious how the surroundings affect one. Sister B. tells a ghost story, how an officer, shot in India, galloped up to the door of his sweetheart in England at the very time of his death. We cannot account for that. Diana tells us she believes in spiritualism. She has heard, in a dark séance, heavy chairs rise and place themselves on the table. We cannot account for that. Diana says there are forces working around us of which we have no notion, which will some day be discovered. To these spiritualism pertains. Fanny R. told us a curious anecdote about "Planchette," in which she believes. Lit the gas, and Sister Hilda, who will take a comic view of things, read "Artemus Ward at a Séance."

Sunday. Sister B. and I went to the Silver Street Chapel. A lovely sermon, but aimed, we really thought, at Diana. Can it be? We wonder very much.

Monday. Such an evening. At the Jorleys. I was going to refuse Cyril any more dances. We were sitting in the conservatory, that is, the inner one, behind the tree fern. He told me the story of "The Lady of Lyons." He had seen Fechter as Claude Melnotte. He told it so beautifully all through. I was in an agony until the end came; and then—I found my hand in his, and he asked me, I know not how, if I could love him. "I am not like Claude Melnotte, a gardener, you know, but I am as fully unworthy of your love as he was of Pauline's." We sat there for three or four dances and then came out separately. I am so happy.

Wednesday morning. Oh, horror! A "cercle" meeting this afternoon. Subject, "Woman's Position," and I am pledged not to marry. I met Cyril accidentally on the way to his station. He says I must pass a resolution annulling the previous one. He was very nice in saying we would have a home "cercle" of our own soon, and discuss no end of literature, art, politics, &c.

Thursday. We had the club meeting yesterday. Carried unanimously that we may marry, and yet that it were better not to (this latter part not unanimously). I got Diana to propose this. She was quite willing to, saying, "Child, that was a foolish resolution of ours." Can this elderly sister of ours have ulterior views for herself? She is *not* going to the Silver Street Chapel next Sunday.

We find no more reference to "cercle" meetings for some eight weeks—due, perhaps, to Christmas intervening; there are, however,

numerous notices of unorthodox tea-drinkings at which the members of the "cercle" helped; also a regular bi-weekly visit to a temperance public-house called the British Waterman. In January we find one meeting at which is discussed the ways and means for a Christmas-tree for poor children. The next is in the middle of February.

Wednesday. Resumed our club meetings. Subject, "Women's Suffrage Bill." Somehow the meeting seemed flat. All the old arguments for and against were trotted out. Diana very strong for having a vote. Afterwards talked of Miss Octavia Hill's "Homes of the London Poor." Mary B. hopes to help in a court. I wonder whether Cyril would buy a court. It would be great fun to work it together and it would pay him five per cent. on his money. I must ask him to-morrow.

The following entries mostly record visits to the B. W. (as the British Waterman is always styled), French lessons in preparation for a foreign trip, and shopping with mamma, and sometimes with Cyril. There is no mention of the "cercle" until April 13th.

Wednesday. Last meeting of the "cercle." No subject, but a long cosey talk, going over the past, and looking into the future. I felt very much like crying all the time. We have had a very happy girlhood; I feel loth to leave it behind, and often wonder what my new life will be like. There will be no more meetings. Mary B. is going to Rome to study painting, Sisters B. and H. are both engaged to be married, and Diana is writing a book. Poor Diana! We heard the other day that Mr. Padusoy is leaving the Silver Street Chapel. He has married a rich Somersetshire widow, and has got a church there somewhere. I don't think Diana minds it. To-morrow will be my wedding-day; we go to Paris and Brussels.

This is the last entry in the diary, and as we close our peep into the proceedings of this remarkable revolutionary club, we cannot but hope that the same freshness of thought and longing for work (which may sometimes have bordered on the extravagant) may follow its members all the days of their lives. For is it not written, "Laborare est orare," and "Magna est veritas et prevalebit"?

PAUL CHANTREY'S DAUGHTER.

SHE paused a moment and gazed furtively around—this Margaret Chantrey, beautiful enough for any king's daughter, with the peculiar something that most people admit to be the prerogative of birth and breeding; an indefinable air and grace, a certain sumptuousness, if the word is not too important to apply to seventeen, blossoming in the tender sunrise of youth.

She, with her elegance, and refinement, and rich attire; her dainty feet, that seemed too airy for the common stone flagging; the maid behind her. What could this bright and fortunate and brilliant girl have to do with that poor young woman on the other side the street?

Margaret saw her; saw the pale, worn face, the eyes that bore traces of weeping, the shabby attire. Should she pass her by?

"No," she said to herself, with passionate eagerness, choking down a great lump in her throat—"Lina was always so good to me. It would be shameful ingratitude."

Then, bidding the maid stay where she was, she flashed across the street, caught the cold fingers from under the coarse shawl, her own warm and rosy from their nest of ermine; and in a strong, sweet voice, cried, "Lina! Lina!"

"Oh!"—with a start of surprise, and a look of consternation out of the heavy blue eyes—"Oh! it is not you, Margaret!"

"Yes it is Margaret. Lina, I have not forgotten those old days when you and your mother were so good to us. I must forget papa before I can forget that."

"But you are—so different now," said Lina du Puy, drawing back in sudden delicacy.

There was certainly a great dissimilarity between them. Margaret Chantrey, in her silk, and velvet, and ermine, and the long white plume trailing from the hat that crowned her curls of gold: everything was, in short, most rare and elegant. The other, in her brown dress and plaid shawl, and shabby black velvet bonnet, with some faded leaves and flowers. As to the two faces: they might have been a study for a painter wanting contrasts.

Possibly Margaret Chantrey had as good blood in her veins as the proudest dame can have. Her father was that brilliant unsuccessful artist, Paul Chantrey, who, in rare moments of boasting, would say that he traced his descent backwards through generations. He was just a Bohemian, as are many other artists: perhaps their want of success makes them so. He did not paint many works. Those few were rare and beautiful: yet the public did not appreciate them until the daisies had blossomed above the grave in which lay

the poor, worn man. Then fine judges said: "Here was, indeed, a genius! If he had been more persevering, or ambitious, or industrious—anything but idle, and poor, and proud." But Paul Chantrey was not idle; he painted and sold when he could find buyers. But he never asked a favour of any man. He was too gentle, and sensitive, and delicate to push his way through the turbulent crowd rushing up the hill of success: and then came his lingering illness, and his death.

His wife was a noble and impoverished Italian lady. She went upon the stage for support, having no means and no friends to help her. Mr. Chantrey lost caste when he married her; though she was lovely as a poet's dream, and inherited the grace and culture of generations of refinement. Her tenderness to him failed to ennoble her in the eyes of strict, pure souls, who never knew cold or starvation, or hunger, or that worst of all agony—the lingering death of loved ones, when a tithe of the gold lavished by us upon a single luxury would have saved them. Being nothing but a stage singer, of course she was quite beneath the notice of well-bred people.

She was brought home one night to Paul, himself then, and long, an invalid, with a face of ghastly whiteness, and a small scarlet stream issuing from the pallid lips. During her exertions that evening, dancing for the sick husband that was at home, and the poor little child, she had broken a blood-vessel. Paul sold the picture in which he had interwoven the love and ambition of his whole life for a mere pittance wherewith to give her decent Christian burial. Some kind, humble friends came to take care of Paul then—Mrs. Chantrey's French friend, Madame du Puy, and her daughter Lina, Bohemians also, for Lina was a dancer on the same stage.

From that time Paul Chantrey never did a stroke of work. He was not able to do it. But he must live. Good Madame du Puy, who had nothing but her daughter's earnings, could not keep him much. It was decided that the little Margaret should go upon the stage, and dance too; and for twelve months *she* supported her father. Madame du Puy nursed him, for it was a long, lingering illness and death, and Margaret earned the pittance that kept them. The girl went to and fro with Lina, who was some years the elder.

On the very night that was Paul Chantrey's last, one whom he had known well, but had not seen for years, chanced to find him out—Richard Ashburton. He had gone very late to college, and then made nearly the tour of the world; while unsuccessful Paul was starving and dying.

"You'll save my child, my darling, Dick?" he said, in the tremulous death weakness. "I know I shall find her mother an angel in heaven, and Margaret has been an angel here."

So Richard Ashburton carried the poor girl home to his mother, who had once loved Paul Chantrey like a son.

Yet it must be confessed that she shrank somewhat from this little

dancing girl, whose mother had been a stage singer. "If Paul had but married wisely!" lamented Mrs. Ashburton.

However, they carried away the girl to their country house, and educated her, and brought her up to wealth and refinement. That was three years ago. Margaret was seventeen now, but older than her years, the result of her early Bohemian life. Just now they had come to town for a month or two's sojourn, and Margaret, chancing to be out alone, met Lina.

Margaret came out of her momentary trance. She was wondering whether anything besides wealth made the difference between herself and dear, noble Lina, whom she had loved with a child's fervour.

"But I'm glad to see you—so glad," with a long, quivering breath. "And you are in trouble—you have been crying! How is—Granny?"

"That is my trouble, Margaret," answered Lina, and the tears flowed afresh. "I've been to beg off, but couldn't. To-night is Mademoiselle Arline's benefit, and they will not give me up. Oh, Margaret, thank God every day of your life that you are not a dancer. We must dance, even if it be on the graves of our kindred."

There was a passionate anguish in the girl's tone. A sob that shook her slight frame.

"Then Granny is ——"

Margaret could not finish her sentence, but looked at her friend with an awe-stricken face. She had always called good old Madame du Puy Granny.

"Granny—my poor mother—is dying," said Lina. "I have been, as I tell you, to get excused to-night, and cannot. It seems that I would give half my own life to stay with her till she dies."

"Do you mean—dying now? To-day?"

"The doctor thinks she will last till evening."

"Oh, Lina, Lina, take me with you. I must see her once again."

The young girl clung to her friend. She was not afraid of her silks, her velvet, and costly ermine being contaminated. For somehow the old life was strong upon her, and these three years of luxury were the dream.

"But Margaret—Miss Margaret, I ought to say—what will they think at home?"

"Nothing; they won't be angry. Mrs. Ashburton may wait for me one moment."

Running across the street to the maid who waited, Miss Chantrey told her to go home, that she was going to see a sick friend, and went back again to Lina.

They hurried along. It was noon—a bleak, dreary March day. Upstairs in a forlorn-looking place, just ready to fall into decay, here, in the garret room, lay Madame du Puy.

"She liked it better because there was no one to make a noise over her head," apologised Lina.

The house had been built by some aristocratic man who had a Dutch taste. Even this upper garret was large. It had two great dormer windows, one of which was filled with vines and flowers—a perfect greenery. The place was scrupulously neat, though the furniture was old and worn. A bright fire burning in the stove, an atmosphere of warmth and faint perfume, and an air of quaintness unusual. Margaret paused in astonishment.

In the bed, under the snow-white cover, lay a wasted, shrunken figure. But Margaret knew it at once, and was kneeling beside the couch a moment later, her great eyes full of tender pity, her own fair face flushed and tearful, and her plump, warm hands clasping those shadows that had nearly lost their hold on life.

"You don't know me, Granny, but I'm little Rita Chantrey. You used to call me Rita, you know. I have never forgotten you, nor how you held poor mamma in your arms all that long night, and how you brought some white roses to put in her coffin."

Granny looked wistfully out of her sunken eyes. "You're a grand lady now, we hear," breathed the dying woman.

"Not so grand that I've forgotten you, or ceased to care for Lina."

A sweet, steadfast smile shone on the face. "Poor Lina! She has so few friends now. None, I think."

How the feeble voice quavered through the words. Rita's heart was full of tenderest sympathy.

"Child!" touching Lina, "you are going to stay with me this one evening? You may stay?"

The slowly-moving eyes questioned so hungrily that the pale girl wavered for a moment. How could she bear to tell her mother the truth.

"I am so glad, so thankful," murmured Madame du Puy. "No, I knew they would not grudge just the last evening to your dying mother. Rita, I am going—to—the far country. Will there be any place for a poor old woman like me?"

"There will," said Margaret, clearly and earnestly.

"I sometimes think—but I never could understand all their doctrines. A parson comes in to pray sometimes, and the prayers are sweet. But looking back on my life, I can see that I have done many wrong things."

"Granny," said Margaret, "you have fed the hungry, and sheltered the homeless. You did not give a cup of cold water only, but the best you had, and sometimes *all* you had. Do you think God will not remember it, and be merciful?"

"Be merciful! That's it. Merciful to me a sinner! Ay, ay. He was so merciful that He sent His Son to die in our stead. Can't you say a little prayer, Rita? Our Father. That was *His* prayer, you know?"

Margaret clasped her hands, and repeated it in a low, faltering, reverential tone.

After that she seemed to doze. Lina and Rita went over to the window and had a talk to themselves, interspersed with many tears.

"She has not suffered for anything," explained Lina. "Only since she got worse, when she feared she might die at any moment. This going away of mine twice a day has been dreadful. Once or twice I have got off the rehearsal, but I couldn't get off the other. It breaks my heart to leave her alone to-night."

Lina broke down, sobbing convulsively.

"And they would not ——"

"No, it spoils the piece. I am a good dancer, you know, and have to take a chief part. But, oh! to think that while I am dancing she may be dying. Not to hear her last word; not to kiss the poor lips as the last breath flutters out of them!"

"Let me think," said Margaret.

She looked steadily over to the grey sky for many moments. Sometimes her face flushed, sometimes it was almost as pale as Granny's in yonder bed. It seemed to her one of the wrongest and saddest and cruellest things that Lina should have to leave her dying mother at the closing hour.

"Is there *no one* at the theatre who can take your place for one single night, Lina?"

"No one. At least, they say there's not, so it comes to the same. It is but an old dance, either—one you must remember, Rita."

"Describe it to me," said Margaret. "Your part especially."

Lina, suspecting not the drift of the question, described her part minutely. After listening for a few minutes, the recollection of it came back to Margaret: she remembered it well.

"I could take it," she said to herself.

Presently she went away, promising to return soon, but there was a strange look in her large, purple-grey eyes, and a peculiar expression hovering about her mouth. Calling a cab, she told the man to drive quickly, and was soon deposited at the elegant mansion that was the present abode of the Ashburtons, who had cared for her since the night of Paul Chantrey's death. They grudged her nothing, these Ashburtons: education, accomplishments, luxury; and only demanded that she should forget the old life utterly in return. They spoke of her father's genius and misfortunes; but they never made the smallest mention of her mother. If by ill-luck Margaret spoke of her, she was met by a frown. Yet these three years had been very happy ones to Margaret Chantrey. They could not sigh over any lack of grace or refinement, or want of beauty: all that was returned to them. At times it really appeared as if Richard Ashburton took a warm and tender interest in her, but he never expressed it. There were times when poor Margaret felt like a waif stranded on some distant shore steeped in exquisite beauty; when one clinging, blossoming vine would have been more to her than all these stately halls.

It chanced on this day that Margaret was alone. Mrs. Ashburton

had gone to her sister's in the country, and Miss Marsh, the governess, had had a telegram in the morning to say her father was ill. Where Richard was Margaret did not know.

"Do any of you know whether Mr. Ashburton will be in soon?" she asked of one of the maids, Wilson.

None of them knew. Dinner was being prepared as usual: it was supposed he would be in then.

Taking something to eat, Margaret changed her attire for plainer things. Then she called Wilson.

"I am going to spend the rest of the day with a friend," she said. "Perhaps I shall stay all night."

"Oh, Miss Margaret! and not even Miss Marsh here to ask! I am afraid Mrs. Ashburton would not like it."

Margaret had thought of this also. Perhaps her remaining out all night might offend Mrs. Ashburton. But then—it might be so late.

"Well, I will come at all events then, Wilson."

"But where is it that you are going, Miss Margaret? The carriage had better fetch you."

"No, no. I shall come home all safe without the carriage. Good-bye, Wilson."

"I'm not quite sure that it is right," thought Wilson. "I wish I had asked her more. Yet the child would not do anything wrong."

She bought some jellies and luxuries, and made her way back in a cab to the dilapidated old house. Lina brightened at her coming, but Granny had changed strangely in these few hours. Now and then she muttered some wandering words, or smiled faintly in Lina's face. And so the night dropped down upon them.

Lina looked grey, and wan, and pinched, not much like the lovely mermaiden she was to represent later in the evening.

"Oh! I can't go," she said, with a cry of despair and pain. "And they will keep back my week's pay, and perhaps give my place to another!"

"Lina!" Margaret took the tearful face in her hands. "Lina, I have been resolving all the afternoon that you shall not go."

Lina questioned her with frightened eyes.

"You shall dress me, and let me go instead."

"What?" exclaimed the wondering Lina.

"Yes. I can take it. I can do the necessary dancing. I remember the part as though I had seen it yesterday. I can, and I will take it. I shall enjoy it, too. It seems to me that the one passion of my life is dancing. You shall stay here and watch; I know all about it, and will not be alarmed at anything. I have ordered a carriage to come for me, and it will bring me back safely."

"Oh, Margaret, I cannot allow you to do this; indeed I cannot. I will give it all up first, theatre and all."

"Yes, you can. I am almost wild for a taste of the old life, just a glimpse of the light and glamour, and the long beats of

the inspiriting music. Why, it would be delicious—for this once only."

"But your friends the Ashburtons?"

Margaret was silent for a moment. "They may be angry, perhaps, just at first; only that. Where's the harm, Lina? Mrs. Ashburton and all the people we know go to see this dancing: if it be right for them to look on, will it be wrong for me to dance?"

"My head aches," said Lina wearily. "When I begin to think of the right and wrong, I get confused. Some of the grand ladies do things that we poor girls shrink from, and yet they fancy that we ——"

"Hush, dear. Let me bathe your poor throbbing temples. No one expects me home until late, so do not give it a thought. *I am going to dance for you to-night.*"

Margaret overruled thus all active scruples. She had such a pretty, imperious way; and to-night, in her glowing health and energy, she was stronger to conquer than poor grief-worn Lina.

She curled her golden hair in wavy ringlets, until it looked like a shimmering sea. Her eyes were luminous lakes, and her cheek blossomed like the heart of a rose. Some strange enchantment inspired her. She was going to have one taste of the old life.

Then she dressed herself suitably in Lina's things: they were both so much of a size as to give no difficulty on that score: and put her own plain dress over all. The carriage ordered drew up in the street below. Margaret bent to kiss poor Granny's cold, wrinkled face and passive lips.

"Don't leave me, Lina," the faint voice murmured: and it made Margaret strong.

"Good-bye, Lina," she said, with a kiss. "I will do everything just as you have directed."

She was late at the theatre. They were scolding about Lina, and she hurried into the dressing-room. The attendant there was a stranger. It was curious that it should have happened so: but the regular woman was ill, and for to-night a substitute was provided. She did not know but it was the regular dancer, Lina du Puy, whom she had to dress. The other girls were ready and had quitted the room, and the woman was a trifle cross at the tardiness of the (amongst *them*) chief dancer. So, amid much hurry, Margaret slipped into her cloudy, airy, diaphanous garments, and ran across to the stage, questioning her own identity.

The audience waited: Margaret was indeed late. This creature, Lurline, rising from the sea foam with the cloud of golden lights about her, was more beautiful than ever before. The surging tide of music throbbed on the air, and it touched some wandering chord in Margaret's nature. Every pulse started into passionate life. The light feet were at home in those graceful poises and whirls, and in that slow,

floating, undulating movement, in which the very soul seemed to grow languid with overwhelming grace.

Up and down. Circles widening, narrowing; drooping arms, and shoulders, and eyes; soft lights in rose and violet, gold and purple; a glamour of beauty, a perpetual dazzle, until at last the Naïad disappeared in her sea-green foam.

Then came a prolonged burst of applause. Lina had never danced like this: had never *looked* the character as Margaret looked it. An eager childish delight seemed to thrill her every nerve.

"You are perfectly marvellous to-night!" declared Mademoiselle Arline, who rarely condescended to speak to the ordinary dancers. "You—— Why—are you a witch, child? It is not Lina du Puy!"

"No, it is not Lina. Her grandmother is dying, and I came to take her place."

"Who are you?"

"Call me Lina. For I *am* Lina to-night."

Something in the young girl checked further inquiries. And mademoiselle was in no wise offended, since the dancing had been so vast a success, and it was her own benefit. At Easter she was going abroad to fulfil other engagements.

The piece went on. Now the audience saw a whirling, radiating circle, a haunting crowd of lovely forms and faces; then only this one peerless girl, holding them breathless. It seemed to Margaret that she could dance on these enchanted boards for ever.

At last the concluding act came. There was some wonderful dancing, some bewildering fairy scenery: and Margaret, on a cloud, with her own cloud of filmy golden hair about her, might have been the Peri indeed.

She hardly listened for thanks and compliments, but hurried off her stage trappings, and hurried on her mortal garments with a sensation akin to intoxication. The hired carriage awaited her, and she sprang in, leaving hosts of questions unanswered.

Arrived at Madame du Puy's, she hastened up the stairs, hardly daring to enter. Lina met her on the threshold.

"I am safe, you see. It was—royal! Why should I not tell the truth? I am not tired, but full of excitement, and throbbing with a lingering sense of music. It was triumph. And your poor mother, Lina?"

Lina shook her head. Margaret gathered the truth from the room's strange stillness.

"Yes, she is gone," sobbed Lina. "She rallied again after you left, and talked, oh! so sweetly. Margaret, is there a heaven for us poor folks who do the best we can in our hard, thorny path? For *she* was so good in her simple, homely way. And I can never, never thank you. Not for worlds would I have missed this evening with her."

Margaret was weeping too. Changing her things again, she

kissed Lina in silence, and ran downstairs, the great sobs in her throat almost choking her. Oh! how strange life was. Sorrow, and death, and gaiety, and carelessness, jostled each other on every side. If she could dare to tell all this to Richard Ashburton, surely he would give her pardon!

The carriage deposited her at home. She shivered a little in the hall. Reaction had set in; all her excitement was gone: how weak and tired she was no one but herself could know.

Richard Ashburton opened the drawing-room door. Pale and stern, his lips compressed to a scarlet line, his eyes steady with a relentless light, he stood.

"Oh!" she exclaimed with a crimson flush, which quickly faded to ashes.

She would have glided by him, but he barred her with his arm, and led her into the dimly lighted-room.

"Where have you been, Margaret?" he asked: and his voice was steely and incisive, like the axe of an executioner.

"Don't ask me to-night," she pleaded in pitiful bewilderment, shrinking at every nerve.

"I did not expect you to answer. Unfortunately, I know—or fear I know. Chance took me to the old theatre to-night: and I thought I saw you amidst the dancers. I could scarcely be mistaken in that face, in that shining hair. Were you there, or not?"

He hoped she would give him an indignant denial. He would believe her against the evidence of his own senses. But Margaret Chantrey would have cut off her right hand sooner than utter an untruth.

"I was there."

A sharp pang, as of a knife's point, pierced Richard Ashburton's heart. Worse than all, he thought she stood there before him bold and defiant. Ah! how our best friends misjudge us because a tear sometimes comes too late. It seemed to Margaret that she should fall on the floor at his very feet; the room swam round to her tired and excited brain. Bitter anger was aroused within him, bitter scorn lay in his tone.

"So," he said, "the old life that we have striven to lead you to forget has a stronger hold upon you than gratitude. It is as my mother predicted."

There are moments in the lives of some women when a sudden revelation lifts them up to a heaven of perfect love and trust. It plunged Margaret into a gulf of black despair. Child as they had always considered her, she knew now that she loved Richard Ashburton with a woman's enduring passion. But his tone, his stern face, misled her. What was she to him? Nothing. Just the contemptible little waif they had saved, and nothing higher or better. Yes! she might (as she believed) as well lay her soul bare to the crowd, before whom she had danced to-night,

as to this man. He and his mother had deemed her a toy, pretty enough to be played with; but far beneath them in all the finest relations of life. And she loved him! She knew it now—she loved him; and he despised her as a thing of scorn. Poor Margaret Chantrey's heart seemed breaking then.

"You know you were to give up all old associates, to blot out that past life and forget it," he resumed in his coldest tone—for indeed this escapade was trying him sorely. "Margaret, it pains me to say it, but there has been a course of duplicity persevered in that one would hardly credit in a mere child. For this plan must have been in your mind for months, and you must have been waiting for an opportunity to put it into execution. It is not possible that you should dance as you danced to-night without long and constant practice. What can you say to my mother? Is this a fitting reward for her kindness?"

He had already judged and condemned her: and, false though his assumptions were, she could not defend herself. She clasped her small white hands together, and there was a curious flickering of the lines about the mouth. One wild impulse crossed her soul: to fling herself at his feet and plead for a little tenderness. Could she dare to do it?

Hesitating, she raised her eyes. How cold and pitiless he looked; how sternly condemning. No, though she fell on her knees, a penitent, and told the truth, he would not believe her: she could see that. And there rushed over herself a most condemning, exaggerated view of the step she had taken: she saw how false it had been, how impossible that it could ever be recalled. All the intoxication, the triumph, the glamour, and the glitter looked most unreal to her now.

"Let me go!" she exclaimed, with a cry of anguish. "You are cruel!"

"Cruel! What have I done? Have we not both tried to lead you to forget the poverty, and toil, and evil of the past? Have we not cared for you tenderly, surrounded you with luxury?—yet the old life is stronger than it all. But you will have to choose between us; to renounce one or the other."

She flew past him like a wild, hunted thing, up the broad stairs to her own room, and locked the door. He doubted her. He believed she could be base, and vile, and full of black deceit! He might forgive, but he could never, never love her. What mad folly in her to think *that* could ever have been! Mrs. Ashburton wanted him to marry his cousin—that rich girl who was there so constantly. She had fancied that he did not care for that girl; but she must have been mistaken. And to stay here, to see another worshipped with all the trust and confidence of his soul—to stay and be nothing to him; worse than nothing: no, she could not bear that. Better that she should go back to the old life.

So reasoned this inexperienced but impassioned girl. And in her foolishness, her desolation, she took a fatal step.

Richard Ashburton sat a long while over his late breakfast the following morning, and yet Margaret came not. Mrs. Ashburton, who had come home very late indeed, and felt weary, had not yet risen. He paced the library in tumult and impatience, waiting for Margaret: she, he supposed, was weary too: and he wanted her to come, that he might tell her how harsh he had been the past night. At mid-day Wilson entered her room. No Margaret was there. On the table lay a brief note, addressed to him.

"I have gone back to the old life."

"I always felt a little afraid," confessed Mrs. Ashburton in her smooth and stately tone. "There was a taint of it in her blood, an alien, gipsy element. Poor Paul! What a pity he should have wrecked himself by marrying that Italian singer!"

Three years had come and gone since Margaret Chantrey left her home of luxury and beauty. They had not found her. Left it for what? Richard Ashburton often asked himself the question. He had been cold and stern to her that night; pitiless, indeed, for his disappointment in her had proved so deep and bitter. But he knew now that the light in her courageous face, which he had termed hardness and duplicity, must have sprung from truth and honour. Foolish, daring, and Quixotic as the step she had taken that night, in dancing, had been, he wished with his whole repentant heart that he had met it differently.

He had been grave before, but now a shadow seemed to hang about him. His mother, with a woman's intuition, guessed that Margaret had been more to him than a bright, winsome child.

"Yet it is best they should be separated," she told herself; but told it with a sigh, for there was some pity in her nature as well as pride. Richard could not be made to understand the wrong it would be to his children to give them such a mother.

In this, the third year, Richard Ashburton went on the Continent, and made there a long sojourn; now halting in this place, now in that. In the last place he stopped at, a little obscure Italian town, fever had broken out, and he took it. The inhabitants had, so many as could, run away in fright, leaving neither women nor nurses for the sick.

Mr. Ashburton had it badly. For a week or two he was quite out of his senses. But his strong constitution had finally conquered the disease, and the balmy April sunshine was doing the rest.

"I owe my life to you, Doctor Biagi," he said thankfully one morning. "My mother will not know how to thank you."

The little, swarthy Italian doctor rubbed his hands together.

"It was a hard fight, signor, but the credit is not all mine.—Yet the signora bade me never mention it."

"The signora!" exclaimed Richard, with a puzzled expression.

"The women had all run away, you know, signor, and we could get no nurses. It might have gone badly with you, but that a beautiful English lady heard of your case, and came to nurse you herself. She never left you until the danger was past, and you were recovering consciousness. You owe your life to her more than to me."

"Who was this English lady?"

"I forget her name just now. Those English names are puzzling to us Italians. She speaks our language as a native, though, and she is so beautiful: an angel's face with bright golden hair."

A strange idea brought a thrill to Richard Ashburton's weakened frame. Speaking Italian as a native—and with beautiful golden hair!

"Was she young, doctor?"

"Quite young."

"Do you think the name was Chantrey?"

"Shan-tree? But yes, it is like that. I did not want her to stay here: she had not the health for it: but she quietly told me she must and should."

"What is the matter with her?" asked Richard quickly.

"The malady that some of you English have," answered the doctor, tapping his chest. "And now she has taken the fever through nursing you. But she has it slightly."

"Taken the fever from me! Good heavens!" added Richard, falling back on his sofa cushions.

"She saved your life," said the little doctor, in his straightforward manner. "And though the fever has not been severe, she has little strength. If you would like to send a message ——"

Ashburton feared he knew what that meant.

"Yes," he answered, with a strange hush in his tone, "I would like to send a message. When are you going? Is it far?"

"Half a league, perhaps. I shall go out again at four."

"Call as you pass," was the brief response.

Dr. Biagi was not wrong when he fancied that Mr. Ashburton intended to go himself. He made no objection after examining his pulse.

A little vine-embowered cottage with a sturdy peasant woman for mistress. Within, the slender form of a watcher, who came forward with an anxious face. It was Lina du Puy.

The explanation of the past may be given in a few brief words.

On the very day following the death of Madame du Puy, Lina received the offer of an engagement in Paris, for which her mother had long hoped. She went to it immediately, taking Margaret with her: and hence the secret of Mr. Ashburton's non-successful inquiries after her. The engagement in Paris at an end, they came on to Italy. Both of them had been most successful in their career since; both had led the most retired and the best of lives. Then Margaret's health began to fail. Symptoms of consumption mani-

fested themselves. Lina remembered the death of Mrs. Chantrey, and shuddered for her friend. Giving up their engagements for a season, they came to this retired town, to see what rest and quiet would do for Margaret. But it did nothing—she grew worse and weaker. Then the fever broke out. They thought they were safe, being so far from the town. And safe they would have been, but that Dr. Biagi told them of his English patient, one Signor Richard Ashburton; and Margaret insisted upon going to nurse him. All this Lina hurriedly told, together with the true history of that long-past night. Margaret had gone to dance in her place that she might stay with her dying mother.

"Let me go in to her," he gasped.

Lina stood aside. Richard Ashburton entered the chamber of death; and there lay Margaret, white and wasted, but with more than mortal beauty.

"Oh, my child! my darling!"

Margaret moved her eyes slowly, and then uttered a low, passionate cry.

He took her in his arms; he kissed the pale, trembling lips and downcast eyelids, still radiant with their beautiful fringe.

"My little wanderer," he said, "my precious darling! you can never know my grief at finding you thus, too late. Oh! why did you leave me? I was cruel that night, unjust; but you need not have been ashamed of the truth. Lina has told me. It was noble, if ill-judged. And if you could understand my soul at this moment, and believe that the old dream of those days has never utterly faded ——" He broke down with emotion.

"A dream?" she murmured.

"The dream that I should win you for my wife. The *hope* that I should. Margaret, I loved you dearly."

She raised her white, wan face, into which there came something of a glorifying flush, and lay in his arms, softly whispering:

"It was best then that I should go, Richard. Best for your mother's sake; f[illegible]es. Let me tell the truth now—death always gives [illegible] know. Some fascination of the old life lure[illegible] Madame du Puy was strong. Th[illegible] ation; they tended my [illegible] ight with the tenderest [illegible] upon the face of your [illegible]. Y[illegible] ht to dance in her [illegible] sent you there.

"Oh, if you had told me all," he groaned.

"[illegible] doubted me—before I had ever spoken! Yes, you did, Richard. I thought you were in [illegible] thought you scorned and despised me; while I—God will forgive it now—loved you with a child's unreasoning, jealous adoration. To be cast aside because I was not your equal, to be held as [illegible] anything, but never

aspire to the height of friend—to see, perhaps, another loved and reverenced—ah! it was a child's foolish folly."

"I loved you then, Margaret; loved you truly, tenderly, passionately. I shall never love another."

She made an entreating gesture with her wasted hands. How bitter all this past misapprehension was!

"I was not worthy of so much love, Richard," she softly whispered. "Perhaps I never should have been. But"—raising the sad, purple eyes, full of their dying lights—"I want you to know that poor dancers may be good and pure, in spite of their shortened skirts and the tinsel they must wear. I and Lina have tried to do our duty before God as truly as we could have done it had we had parents to protect us, handsome homes to shelter us. I am going to Him with, so far, a clear conscience."

"And you came to save me; you have given your life for mine! Oh, Margaret! *is* it too late? Can no love, and no repentance bring you back? Ah, heaven! this is bitter."

"It is best, Richard: dear Richard, believe me it is best," she answered; but her voice began to waver strangely, and the dusk of twilight floated before her dreamy eyes. "I thank you for some happy years. I was glad to do it—at the last. Your life is grander and broader than my poor, pale years, gone astray among thorns. Ask God to forgive me all—for your sake."

He gathered her into his arms, and the warm tears of passionate regret dropped upon her pure face, slowly turning to sculptured marble. One tender, fluttering kiss, and the old life and the new life were alike ended.

Margaret Chantrey was laid in her quiet grave: which Lina du Puy will often turn aside out of her way to tend.

Whether this bright, impulsive, but grand and tender soul was wasted we cannot decide here. Was it better that she should be taken to her rest thus early, or that she should have stayed decorously at Mrs. Ashburton's, and lived to be Richard's wife? Who can tell? God knows best.

Mrs. Ashburton frets a little amid her state and elegance that Richard does not marry. She has well-nigh forgotten the laughing, wayward girl who once made the house bright.

He will never forget. Is it so strange a thing to be true to the woman a man has loved, and who gave her sweet young life for his? Is it not a little fragment of the greater love, left amid the ruins of this grey old world?

A. M. D.

LITTLE THINGS.

A meeting after twenty years!
I'm forty, and a colonel.
We parted full of hopes and fears,
When both our lives were vernal.
You calmly eat your *fricandeau*,
My heart gives ne'er a flutter,
The while I think how, years ago,
I cut you bread and butter.

I've lived so long in Eastern climes
No doubt I'm dull and silly;
We did not often see the *Times*,
To read of Piccadilly.
This direful war 'twixt Russ and Turk,
You laugh and call it "horrid!"
But think a sadder piece of work
That mole upon your forehead.

We touch on Music, Drama, Art,
For one and all you're ready;
You used to sing some songs by heart
When we were Nell and Teddy.
To watch you draw, to hear you play,
I've often shirked my Latin;
You say you sat to Daubs, R.A.,
Who paints such lovely satin!

I have some little things laid by:
Great things we thought them, surely?
A sketch you made, all trees and sky,
A rose you gave demurely.
Oh, Vicat Cole! That Surrey view
I held a priceless treasure—
Nor all the roses grown at Kew
Could yield *that* rose's pleasure.

Our hostess bows, you sail away
With soft frou-frou and rustle;
Well, well, one changes every day
In Life's relentless bustle!
And to forget we've met again
Shall be my first endeavour,
That in my mind you may remain
A little thing for ever.—G. B. STUART.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XVI.

GUY'S CHILD.

ONCE more, as in the days gone by, Pomeroy Abbey was raising its proud head aloft, conscious of the presence of its lord. Leolin had come down to see that things should be in suitable readiness for his bride. Six years now, and no lord had been there.

Since the death of Guy, his widow had lived in that part of the abbey which stood between the gateway and the tower. Leolin, wishing to show courtesy to her as his brother's widow (though he never would be able to show her cordiality), decided to leave her in it undisturbed. He would reside in the other part of the front portion, and in the north wing, which adjoined it. How Mrs. Pomeroy would like to be deposed from her state and authority as Lady of Pomeroy—for no other had supplanted her—was another question. She lived a retired life. Stories had gone about to her prejudice at the time of Guy's death, but time had softened down the feeling against her, and formal visits were paid her. The ardent longing for personal homage and for gaiety, which had been amid her besetting sins, seemed entirely to have left her. That fatal night had turned the current of her life. She was now reserved, cold, proud, and had become, as the French happily term it, a dévote. Yet how young she was still !—wanting yet some few years of thirty.

Mrs. Pomeroy had not been entirely without suitors during these six years. Perhaps we ought to say would-be suitors, for only one had ventured to bring matters to a climax. That was Mr. Knox, of the Knoll : a man of good property, and a relative of old Mrs. Knox

who knew the Essingtons. Whether it was Alice Pomeroy's fortune, or her beauty, or her position, that made the attraction, certain it was that several men desired to marry her. Mr. Knox was the first to try his fate ; and he received his answer—an answer which surprised him. Had he presented himself to Mrs. Pomeroy with a proposition to poison her, he could not have been met with greater indignation. She looked ready to strike him—"and, egad, I thought she'd have done it," he said, when telling the tale to a friend later. Mrs. Pomeroy ordered him out of the abbey and the doors to be closed against him, after telling him that his proposal was an insult and himself a madman for making it, and asking him, with an intensity of scorn that has rarely been heard in the human voice, whether he supposed she would marry *him* after having been the wife of the Lord of Pomeroy. The report of this got wind somehow ; it served to deter other aspirants, and Mrs. Pomeroy was left unmolested.

In the business room below, which had shelves and account books and tin boxes and desks in it, and which adjoined another and larger business room that was called the audience chamber, sat the new Lord of Pomeroy, and Gaunt, the ex-gentleman-keeper. For Gaunt was not the keeper now. He had given that post up when he took upon himself the control of the property in compliance with the wishes of the late lord, George.

John Gaunt, looking noble as ever, but sadly worn and thin, sat before the large desk, which he always used. It was in fact the lord's desk—when any reigning lord chose to meddle with his own affairs and keep his own accounts. Leolin had drawn a chair near. They were going over the receipts and expenditure of the last six years ; the years that had elapsed since Guy died and George succeeded. Leolin, lord now, thought he had a right to inquire into these items ; and Gaunt, courteous ever, afforded him all the information he asked for.

"How well the estate has righted itself," observed Leolin in grateful admiration. "You have been an excellent manager."

"I have done my best," replied Gaunt.

"And were all the revenues, except the portion paid to Mrs. Pomeroy, transmitted to my brother George ?"

"Yes. All."

"You transmitted them yourself ?"

"No : I have paid them over to Mr. Hildyard. It was he who transmitted them to your brother."

"I wonder what George did with the money ?" cried Leolin musingly, leaning back in his chair and thrusting his hands into his coat pockets. "He could not spend it ; it's not likely he could, out there. I hope he has left a will !"

"Oh yes, he is sure to have done that."

"Not at all sure, Gaunt. George was always careless in money matters—thinking of all the world before himself. And his death

was unexpected, remember. If he has not left a will, who—I wonder—would come in for the money ?"

"His wife and child," spoke Gaunt, who seemed just then to have gone into a reverie on his own score.

"Wife and child ! you are dreaming, Gaunt," laughed Leolin. "Were you thinking of poor Guy ?"

"Perhaps I was," said Gaunt, rousing himself, and plunging into the books again.

"I should have a share, I suppose ; and Joan would, and Isabel ; and—would *she ?*"

"Who, sir ?"

"Mrs. Pomeroy."

"I should fancy not."

"I suppose the servants have behaved well, Gaunt ?"

"Very well indeed. They have not had too much to do," added Gaunt, with a smile.

Leolin threw back his head. "No, indeed ! The whole large lot of them basking in idleness here, just because they were George's servants, while I had to work like a horse over yonder. It's fine to be the Lord of Pomeroy !"

Gaunt answered nothing. His head was bent over his figures again. In half an hour their task was finished, and Gaunt rose, after locking up the desk.

"Then, in a week's time we shall see you here again," he casually remarked to Leolin : who was returning to London on the morrow.

"In a week's time you will see me here again, all being well, and my wife with me. And then," added Leolin, "I shall ask you to resign your trusteeship, Gaunt, and give you many thanks for your faithful stewardship. I mean to go in for work myself."

"I should wish to keep it on a little longer," said Gaunt quietly.

"Why ?"

"It may be better that I should."

"You are not ready with the accounts, I suppose ?"

"Ready at any moment, as far as the accounts go," replied Gaunt. "But—I am not quite ready on other scores."

They stood looking at one another. Gaunt calm, noble, towering in his great height nearly a head above Leolin, who was himself of middle height. Leolin thought Gaunt's manner rather peculiar ; and he was suddenly struck with his look of sickness.

"Are you not well, Gaunt ?"

"Not very."

"You are frightfully thin. Why don't you speak to Norris ?"

"Oh, I don't think it's anything serious," was the careless answer.

"How do you do this morning, Uncle Leolin ?" demanded a young lady of some six years old, who came darting into the room. It was Mary Pomeroy, Guy's child. She was very nice looking with the large grey Pomeroy eyes, and pretty, well-formed features.

Her complexion was of that rather dark (or yellow) tinge that sometimes goes with grey eyes, and the colour on her cheeks was more like vermillion than rose. She carried her little proud head upright, her fair curls falling back on her neck, and walked with the air of a queen.

"Is it you, Mary? Come and give me a kiss."

"I shall not, Uncle Leolin," was the defiant answer.

"No! And why?"

"Because you turned me out of the garden yesterday. You made Bridget take me indoors."

"But it rained. You were getting wet—and you had thin shoes on."

"They were my dancing shoes: I had been taking my lesson. But I'll not kiss you, Uncle Leolin. I like the rain; and I always have my own way when you are not here."

"Do you! Then it is as well that I should be here, Miss Mary."

"Do you know that old Jerome is outside in the corridor? He is waiting to see you."

"Is he?" cried Leolin quickly. "Tell him to come in, there's a little fairy."

"You may tell him yourself, Uncle Leolin. If you are not good to me, I shall not be good to you."

Anything more sturdily commanding than the air of this little lady, as she stood, still and resolute, the reader never saw. She had inherited the stern, indomitable spirit of her father, and she had been the indulged plaything of the abbey—in fact, its little mistress—so that all the obstinate will of the spirit had been fostered, not repressed. A daring child was Mary Pomeroy, and she had one of those remarkably sensible, knowing, precocious minds that are sometimes looked upon with awe. She would say things more suitable for a girl of sixteen than one of six. Leolin laughed; and Gaunt, who was departing, sent in Jerome.

"How is it you have not been to see me before, Jerome?" asked Leolin, shaking hands with the old man. "I have been here these three days."

Jerome made some trifling excuse. 'Twas only yesterday he heard that Mr. Leolin had arrived.

"Well, I went to the Keep yesterday to see you, Jerome, as you did not come to see me, and I could not get in," said Leolin. "I rang three or four times at that tinkling old bell of yours, which must have been cast in the year One. You must be fine and lonely in that silent Keep, Jerome! Will you come back to the abbey?"

"Many thanks, Mr. Leolin, but I couldn't return," said the old man, with almost trembling eagerness. "I'm used to my Keep now, sir, and I could not leave it again."

"As you will. Look here, Jerome—is Gaunt a little touched?"

"A little what, sir?"

"Touched in the head," explained Leolin, tapping his forehead. Jerome looked surprised.

"Why, Mr. Leolin, he has got one of the strongest of heads, Gaunt has."

"His manner was certainly queer this morning, and he looks very ill. When I told him I should take the accounts into my own hands, thanking him for his faithful stewardship, he intimated that he could not give them up. The accounts were ready, he said, but he was not."

"Anything that Gaunt says, he must have his good reasons for; be sure of that, Mr. Leolin."

"I like Gaunt," struck in Mary Pomeroy, in her defiant tone, as if it behoved her to take up his championship. "He is kinder than you, Uncle Leolin. When I was little he made me a present of a beautiful grey donkey, and taught me to ride."

Leolin laughed as he took the young lady's hand. "I am going to pay a visit to your mother: will you conduct me," said he playfully. And Miss Mary was pleased to do it, and walked up the grand staircase full of importance. She liked patronage of all kinds.

Mrs. Pomeroy was seated in the sombre oak chamber, which faced the quadrangle. Handsome though its carved paneling was, it looked dull and dark. Only herself could know what her feelings were, as she gazed on that fatal west tower that faced her, what her repentance was for the foolish part she had played.

Some fine work of silken embroidery was in her hand, which she put down as Leolin entered. She wore rich black silk; on her bright hair black lace rested and fell behind, somewhat after the fashion of the lace veil worn by a Spanish woman. It was Mrs. Pomeroy's usual custom to wear this now. Her mother sometimes scolded her for making herself "into an old woman," but she adhered to it.

How thin she was!—thin, and worn, and anxious looking! but her face retained its old beauty, and a soft bright colour flushed her cheeks as she rose to greet the Lord of Pomeroy. Leolin had paid her one formal visit on his arrival; he was now paying her a second, preparatory to his departure.

"I must thank you for allowing me to retain these rooms," she said—and there was a harshness in her tones, as there always had been, which grated on the refined ear of Leolin, who liked a low sweet voice, that "most excellent thing in woman." "I believe that I ought, according to former custom, to have removed into the south wing: but I have grown to love these rooms, and should have been sorry to quit them. I thank you, Lord of Pomeroy, for your courtesy."

"I am pleased that you should retain them: I should not think of wishing you to quit them," spoke Leolin in his natural good feeling. He did not like Mrs. Pomeroy: but she was his brother's widow, and he accorded to her personal deference.

"And I hope," he continued, "that you and my wife, Lady Anna, will be good friends. I am sure you will like her."

"I shall be glad to make Lady Anna's acquaintance," replied Mrs. Pomeroy coldly. And she took up her work again.

Conversation flagged. Leolin had to make it; she answered him by monosyllables, apparently without interest. He rose to terminate his visit.

"Oh, I forgot to ask you one thing," she interposed. "Have you heard any further particulars of your brother George's death?"

"No more than we heard at first," he answered—"that poor George died in action. He went forth in the morning bright and well and in high spirits; and at night he was lying dead on the battle-field."

"It was very sad," sighed Mrs. Pomeroy.

"His confidential servant, Moore, is on his way home, I believe. He will bring the details, with George's personal effects and papers. We thought Moore would have landed ere this," added Leolin, as he formally shook hands with Mrs. Pomeroy, and quitted the room. Mary was in the corridor with her skipping-rope.

"Did mamma tell you I was naughty, Uncle Leolin?"

"Well—I daresay she might have told me, had I asked her if you were."

"I would not do my lessons this morning. Miss Lorne has the toothache; and mamma wanted to hear them instead, and I ran away. But I don't call that being *very* naughty, Uncle Leolin."

The old abbey of Pomeroy stood out, its walls grey and gloomy in the dim twilight of the August evening. Its windows, however, were in contrast to its walls, many of them being as gay as light could make them, and its retainers bustled about in their preparations, for Leolin, Lord of Pomeroy, was bringing home his bride.

The marriage had taken place in London the previous day. Leolin would fain have reached the abbey the same night; but it was too far, so they made a halt on the road. Now, in the twilight of the second day, they were nearing it; and Lady Anna leaned forward in the carriage to look for the first time upon her future home. The huge pile rose, high and mighty, in front of her.

"What a large place, Leolin!"

"It is, my dearest."

"And there is a real ghost that haunts it, they say."

Leolin laughed. "I fear the ghost has been dead and gone this many a year: however disappointing it may be to your love of romance."

"Which are Mrs. Pomeroy's rooms?"

"Those to the right of the entrance, facing us. The reigning lord has always occupied the whole of the front, but I would not

turn Mrs. Pomeroy out. We shall occupy the rooms on this side the entrance and the north wing which adjoins it."

"It must take an army of servants to keep it up; only this front pile is immense. Will there be two households, Leolin? Our own and Mrs. Pomeroy's?"

"Certainly. We shall have nothing to do with Mrs. Pomeroy, or she with us: she has her own servants and household, and we have ours. You and she need not meet once in a twelvemonth, unless you both please."

"But, Leolin, I think it will be delightful to meet: I am glad she is there. What sort of a person is she? Young?"

"Seven or eight and twenty, I fancy, and beautiful yet. I have only known her lately, have seen her but three times in all; but she strikes me as being the very saddest being I ever came across—proud, reserved, and sorrowful; and they say that formerly, previous to that shocking catastrophe, she was all life and merriment. She moves about with a softened footstep, sees little, if any, society, and seems to take no interest in life, scarcely even in her child, though I believe she is passionately fond of her."

Anna leaned closer to her husband in the twilight. "Leolin, she could not have been really false to her husband!"

"Hush, my darling," he whispered, a haughty flush rising to his face. "To believe the wife of a Pomeroy capable of that would be a brand upon the name for ever. No, no: only to meet another without Guy's knowledge, although it was a brother, was enough of wrong upon him; and Guy must have felt it keenly. A Pomeroy has always been, in regard to his wife, sans peur et sans reproche."

The carriage rolled in at the large gateway, and drew up at the entrance—that on the right hand. The servants stood within the hall on either side, bowing to their lord and their new lady. Old Jerome had come from the Keep to take his place at their head. Lady Anna spoke a few timid words to them: but there was true kindness in her tone, a sweet gentleness in her face and manner: and the servants knew at once that their future mistress was one to be loved.

Lady Anna was pleased with all she saw. The rooms were so numerous it would take her a week to know her way about them, she laughingly said. Some of them had been decorated for her, under John Gaunt's superintendence; modernised, he called it; and were of almost regal splendour; but the greater portion remained quaint, sombre, and ancient.

"Do you think you shall be happy?" whispered Leolin, as he went to her dressing-room to take her away for dinner. "Do you regret St. Ives?"

Regret! Happy! A husband she loved, and this princely home, compared with what might have been—the simple Duke of St. Ives

and his domineering mother!—she clasped her hands as she dwelt on the suggested contrast. "Oh, Leolin, my dearest, I am glad to be your wife!"

In the morning Leolin showed her over their own portion of the abbey, telling her this and that of the past history of the Pomeroys. Anna was deeply interested in all she heard, and especially in the tale of the nun's picture and the prediction. That inveterate gossip, old Mrs. Knox, had given Anna her version of it in London, but she heard the truth now. Leolin, at least, was not superstitious; contact with the world had rubbed childish impressions out of him; but Anna had rather a love of the marvellous.

The afternoon was passing when they strolled into the garden—the large enclosure of land stretching out at the north side of the abbey. Gaunt had taken care that it should be well kept up.

"I could lose myself here as well as in the abbey, Leolin. What lovely sheltering trees!—what beautiful flowers!—what winding walks and shady dells! But—Leolin!—who are they?"

Leolin followed the direction of her eyes, and saw a lady and child, who had just come into view round the bend by the cascade.

"That is Mrs. Pomeroy, Anna. I will fetch her here and introduce you to one another."

But Mrs. Pomeroy, the instant she caught sight of them, had turned sharply away towards the shrubbery; which would take her to the egress gate; catching up the child's hand as she went. Miss Mary drew her hand away again and set off to run to Leolin.

"Mary, stay here," quickly exclaimed Mrs. Pomeroy.

"It is Uncle Leolin, mamma. I am going to him."

"But I tell you to stay here."

"And I tell you I must go to him," replied Miss Mary, exercising as usual her own indomitable will. And she continued her way to Leolin in defiance of her mother.

"Have you come back to the abbey, Uncle Leolin?"

"Yes," answered he, stooping to kiss her. "Go and speak to that lady, Mary."

"Who is she?" returned the child.

"She is the Lady of Pomeroy."

Walking forward quickly, he overtook Mrs. Pomeroy. She coldly shook him by the hand.

"My wife is there, Mrs. Pomeroy. Will you come now, and be introduced to her?"

"Would it be agreeable?"

"Oh, yes; she wishes to make your acquaintance. We got home last night; as I daresay you heard."

Meanwhile Mary had drawn towards Lady Anna, with a slow but fearless step, her grey eyes—the keen Pomeroy eyes—scanning her closely. Anna held out her hand that she might come quicker; but

the child, instead of responding to the implied welcome, halted at a few yards' distance.

"What's your name?" boldly inquired she, with all the haughtiness of a Pomeroy.

"Lady Anna."

"My Uncle Leolin says you are the Lady of Pomeroy."

"I believe I am," smiled Anna.

"You are not. Mamma is the Lady of Pomeroy. Why do you tell a story?"

Anna felt amused. "We will not dispute about it, my dear. Tell me your name."

"Mary Alice Joan Pomeroy. My papa was Guy, Lord of Pomeroy. Uncle Leolin's the lord now."

"Yes, I know he is."

"And mamma's the lady," she repeated, greatly defiant. "Were you ever at the abbey before?"

"No."

"That's the east tower, and that's the north tower," said the child, doing the honours gravely of her paternal home. "And that queer place, over yonder, is the Keep. Jerome lives in it."

Anna looked in the direction of the Keep, and saw a round structure of grey stone, covered with moss like the abbey, a small narrow window being discernible here and there.

"Who is Jerome?" asked she. "Stay—I remember I saw him last night."

"Jerome was the confidential attendant on the Lords of Pomeroy. Do you know what that means?"

"Yes," laughed Anna.

"He was my grandpapa's attendant: and when grandpapa died, he became papa's; and when papa died, he would not stay in the abbey any longer, but went to the Keep. I was a baby then, but Bridget tells me about it. I go to see Jerome sometimes."

"The Keep belongs to the abbey then; to the Lords of Pomeroy?" continued Anna, thinking her a singularly intelligent child for her age.

"It belongs to them of course. It was my Uncle George's while he lived, and now it is Uncle Leolin's. Did you know that Uncle George never came home, though he was the lord?"

"I have heard so."

"But the Keep is Jerome's to live in for his life: the old lord gave it him when he was dying. That was my grandpapa: we call him the old lord."

"Who has made you wise, and told you all this?"

"They all tell me. Bridget tells me, and Jerome tells me, and Aunt Joan tells me when she comes here, and Mr. Gaunt tells me. Gaunt used to be the gentleman-gamekeeper. The men under him were the real keepers, you know, though Gaunt was called so; but

Gaunt was really a gentleman, and traces his descent back, as we do. I hear nothing but tales of the Pomeroys. We are descended from kings, we Pomeroys, so there are many things to tell of us; we are not like common people. You should hear old Naomi Rex talk about us. She is Bridget's aunt, and she lives in the forest—and when I rode up there on my pretty donkey that Gaunt gave me, she used to come out and feed it with stuff from her garden. You don't know how angry I used to make Bridget, because I would gallop the donkey, and Bridget could not run fast enough to keep up with me. That was when I was little. I have a pony now."

"And does Bridget still run beside you?"

"No: we borrow Jeffs."

"Borrow Jeffs!"

"Jeffs is the lord's coachman, not mamma's; ours is Croft; but mamma likes best to trust me to Jeffs because he is old and steady. Jeffs rides one of the old horses that won't go faster than my pony. I asked Jeffs at first why he would not be mamma's coachman, and he said he should have been hers, only I was a girl and not a boy. We go up to old Naomi's, and she tells me tales of the Pomeroys—how great and good they were. Mamma will not let me repeat the tales to her, she says she has heard too much of them: but then, you see, mamma is not a true Pomeroy."

"You are a strange child!" involuntarily exclaimed Lady Anna.

"That's because I am a Pomeroy," returned the young lady. "If I want to make mamma angry, I tell her that I am a Pomeroy and she's not. She beat me once for saying it and banished me to the nursery for two days. I did not care: I have the Pomeroy spirit."

"How *can* they have brought the child up like this?" thought Anna, feeling quite dismayed. "And I am sure she would be a sweet child, properly trained."

Leolin came up with Mrs. Pomeroy, as the thought passed through her mind, and introduced them to each other.

"Mrs. Pomeroy," he briefly said. "And this," he added, "is my wife, Lady Anna."

Anna blushed and put out her hand in cordiality—as it was right to do between connections so near. Mrs. Pomeroy wore the same attire that we last saw her in: the rich black silk, made tight to the throat; the black lace mantilla (it looked like it) on her head. Anna was in a light gleaming silk; her fair, bright hair, worn without ornament, shining in the sunlight every time she moved her parasol. It was a very hot day, and neither of them had put on a bonnet. They were quite a contrast: the one looking so gay and bright; the other dark and sombre: even her parasol was black.

Anna, blushing, had put out her hand, her sweet face wearing almost an imploring look, hoping for an answering welcome. To this sensitive-minded girl, the coming to Pomeroy Abbey to supplant

Mrs. Pomeroy had seemed a formidable thing; one she shrank from; and she yearned for a few words of reassuring sympathy. But Mrs. Pomeroy curtseyed distantly, and would not meet the hand; would not appear to see it. The child had just spoken of the Pomeroy spirit: one of the Pomeroy frowns rose to the face of the lord.

They stood in unpleasant silence, resulting from Mrs. Pomeroy's marked discourtesy. Therefore, when a dusty travelling-carriage, drawn by four post-horses, was seen to come in view, as it did at the same moment, the diversion it caused served to soften the awkward feeling. From the part of the garden where they stood, the approach to the abbey was visible; and this travelling-carriage, its blinds down, had turned off the high road and was sweeping up it. A man-servant sat on the box, and a very large coat-of-arms was emblazoned on the panels. The eyes of Mary were quick; she was the first to speak.

"The Pomeroy arms! Why, it must be Aunt Joan!"

But the eyes of Leolin had expanded with amazement as he gazed. They were the arms of the *Lords* of Pomeroy, and no living man, but himself, had a right to use them; certainly no living woman, save his wife, *as* his wife. The full arms, with their quarterings, their supporters, and all the rest of the adjuncts, now conspicuous on that travelling-carriage, belonged to the lord alone: the arms used by the other branches of the family were more simple. Mrs. Pomeroy strained her gaze upon the arms, and her face became white as death. She had ceased to use the arms when Guy died: but had her child been a boy instead of a girl, she would have had the right to use them as the young lord's mother.

"It can never be Rupert!" burst from the compressed lips of Leolin, his thoughts flying to the one who ought to have been lord, and was not. "To appear amongst us again, would be to dare his fate—and we could not save him from it."

Anna stole her hand within her husband's. The name of Rupert brought all sorts of dread to her mind. "What would it be—his fate?"

"Death," Leolin mechanically answered—"death by the public verdict. But what idle dream is coming over me?" broke off the lord, wiping his face: "it cannot be Rupert."

Mary Pomeroy laid tight hold of her uncle. "Look at mamma," she said, in a frightened whisper.

He turned, as did his wife; and they hastened to hold Mrs. Pomeroy. Her hands had dropped, her features were drawn and ghastly. The mention of Rupert had frightened her to agony: was he in truth coming home to brave his fate? No one in the world would dare to use those arms, save Rupert.

CHAPTER XVII.

STARTLING VISITORS.

THE carriage, that was causing so much painful speculation, drove in at the large archway and stopped. A lady in deep mourning—a tall, handsome, right regal-looking woman—descended from it, followed by a female attendant and a sick child, a boy of some seven or eight years old. She inquired for Mrs. Pomeroy, and was ushered up the grand staircase. The lord walked forward to hear the message brought to Mrs. Pomeroy, and felt greatly relieved. Only a lady! But where on earth had she picked up that carriage?

Alice proceeded to her reception-rooms. She saw the child lying on a couch, the attendant near him. The lady rose at the entrance of Mrs. Pomeroy, threw back her crape veil, and they stood face to face.

"Do you know me?" the stranger inquired.

Remembrance was dawning over Mrs. Pomeroy. Surely it was Sybilla Gaunt, the daughter of Gaunt the gentleman-keeper, she who had left the village nearly eight years before, and with whose good name rumour had made free. There was no mistaking her; those nobly beautiful features, once seen, could not be forgotten.

"You are Sybilla Gaunt!"

"I was Sybilla Gaunt, years ago. I am Sybilla Pomeroy."

Mrs. Pomeroy froze at once. "What may be the purport of your visit?" she coldly asked.

"I requested to see you privately, as in courtesy bound: and to explain to you why I must from henceforth assume my rights: however sorry I shall be," she added with a bow, "to displace the Lady of Pomeroy."

"I am not the Lady of Pomeroy," sharply interrupted Alice.

"Not in point of fact; I am aware of that: but you have held sway here as such."

"I do not hold it now," interposed Alice, her voice sounding harsher than usual. "It is not I who am Lady of Pomeroy."

"Then who is?—if you will allow me to ask."

"The lord's wife."

"The lord! Of whom do you speak?"

"Of whom should I speak but Leolin?" was the retort. "Leolin is the Lord of Pomeroy."

"Leolin! Surely it is not possible that Leolin has assumed ——"

Alice Pomeroy would not allow her to go on. Once more came her harsh voice in interruption. Persons who have not been particularly white themselves generally assume, where they can, to regard others as of the blackest: and very black indeed did Mrs. Pomeroy consider Sybilla Gaunt to be. This was the source of her discourtesy.

"Leolin is the Lord of Pomeroy by right. He has no need to *assume* to be."

The visitor approached the sofa; and, taking her child by the hand, whispered to him: "Rupert dear, can you walk a few steps? Yes, I think you can: I want you to see this lady."

She lovingly lifted him down, and led him up to Mrs. Pomeroy. He was a graceful, aristocratic child, though now fearfully pale and thin: his features were beautiful, he had his mother's expressive violet eyes, with the long dark lashes; but there was no mistaking that his sire had been a Pomeroy. The visitor held him before her.

"This child," she said, "is the Lord of Pomeroy."

Mrs. Pomeroy, taken by surprise, could neither assent nor refute; but a sudden thought prompted her to speak. "Is it well," haughtily pointing to the servant, "that family discussions should be carried on before a menial?"

"She does not understand a word: she is French. Mrs. Pomeroy, Leolin is not lord, and never has been. The moment the breath went out of my husband's body, his son, this child, became Lord of Pomeroy."

"It is easy to assert a thing," scornfully laughed Mrs. Pomeroy. "George Pomeroy may have made you a tardy reparation—I know not: you will doubtless say so—but this child is seven years old, if he is a day."

"You may have heard of the Gaunt blood," spoke Sybilla calmly; "my father would tell you that it is not less pure than fiery. Can you look at me, and believe that I have ever disgraced it?"

"You left the village to follow George Pomeroy."

"Yes: but many months before that I had become George Pomeroy's wife. We were married here. Here, in the chapel attached to the abbey."

"Can this be true?" murmured Mrs. Pomeroy.

"I will not reiterate the assertion," was the proud retort. "It will be easy of proof as your own marriage."

"It was performed in secret?"

"It had to be performed in secret, for good reasons of my husband's. It was known to none, save the priest who married us, good Father Andrew, and to Rupert."

"Oh! Known to Rupert?"

Disbelief, almost bordering upon scorn, pervaded the tone of the last words. Sybilla quietly corrected it.

"Certainly to Rupert. He was present at the marriage. Later, when George came over to the old lord's funeral, he disclosed the truth to my father and to Guy; and he made all necessary arrangements for my quitting Abbeyland, but I wished to remain in it as long as I could for my father's sake. When I did go, Rupert took me as far as Holyhead, and George received me on the other side. A little later, my boy was born."

"In Ireland?"

"In Ireland. George was quartered there. He afterwards started

for India with the regiment. I followed him thither when I was strong enough, taking my child and its nurse. The Indian climate did not agree with the child, and he has not been very strong," she added, glancing fondly at Rupert, who had returned to the distant sofa. "He is nearly eight years old now."

"He is veritably and truly the Lord of Pomeroy?" uttered Mrs. Pomeroy, unable to take in the fact, though she no longer doubted the truth of the story.

"He is as truly the Lord of Pomeroy as anyone can be, save—save—him who is yet a fugitive. *He* is the veritable Lord of Pomeroy, and will be to his life's end, although he is debarred from enjoying his rights as such."

"I think he must be dead," whispered Mrs. Pomeroy, with quivering lips.

"No, he is not dead," Sybilla was beginning. But she broke off suddenly, her tone changing to coldness. "Let the subject, if you please, be a barred one between us. It is one that you may not care to dwell upon; and I will not."

Alice Pomeroy's face deepened to crimson: the next minute it was left paler than before. Her lips trembled.

"I see. You have no more pity for me than others. You have judged me harshly as they have. No one stood by me in my bitter trial. In common humanity you must finish the sentence you began. Is he alive?"

"Yes. At least, he was a short while ago. My husband used to hold communication with him now and then."

"From himself! By letter! He may be coming back here," added Mrs. Pomeroy in agitation. "He may, not understanding his danger, be wishing to endeavour to assume his rights as Lord of Pomeroy!"

"He will never do that," replied Sybilla, her voice inexpressibly sad. "He recognised George as the fitting lord, under the circumstances, and this child as his heir."

That Sybilla in her heart condoned the unhappy Rupert's sins, there could be little room to doubt. Mrs. Pomeroy began to shiver. She often did when the past was brought unexpectedly before her: and she did not at all forgive Sybilla for bringing it.

"With what object have you returned here?" she resumed pettishly.

"Need you ask—now that you know who I am?" returned Sybilla with quiet dignity. "To bring up my child in the home of his inheritance; and to reside in it of my own right. I am the Lady of Pomeroy."

Mrs. Pomeroy mused. "How will Leolin receive this?—and his wife, Lady Anna? They were married but two days ago. He introduced her to me just now as the 'Lady of Pomeroy.'"

"I cannot understand it. Notice was sent to Mr. Hildyard that

George left a son—who had of course become Lord of Pomeroy. And my father knew it all along. How they can have suffered poor Leolin to assume the inheritance is inexplicable."

"Why did you not come over at once?"

"I came as soon as I could come; as soon as little Rupert's health allowed it. George's own man attended us, bringing his papers and effects. We came by the overland route. In Paris Rupert was again taken ill, and that detained us. But I saw no cause for any particular haste, knowing of the instructions sent to Mr. Hildyard," concluded Sybilla.

"It will be a blow for Leolin." And Mrs. Pomeroy half laughed as she said it—just as though she enjoyed the blow.

"I am very, very sorry to inflict it—but I have no choice. I would not willingly have come to sow discord: if Leolin will be reasonable, I will be. They may have the grandeur and the sway still, in all but what concerns my boy."

"Had you any other children?"

"Three," she sighed. "They died in India."

"I know who this one is like," said Mrs. Pomeroy—"like him he is named after. Oh, why did you name him Rupert?" she continued, in a wailing tone of pain.

"We liked the name: and George was always fond of his brother Rupert. Rupert joined us in Ireland, and was at the child's christening. But I must see Leolin."

Mrs. Pomeroy sent a messenger to request Leolin's presence. Strange, perhaps, to say, this astounding news was not unwelcome to her, now she came to revolve it. She disliked Leolin: he had not been sparing of his scorn of herself and her deeds when he came over at Guy's death, and some good-natured listener had repeated the words. She had never forgiven Leolin. It would not be too much to say that she hated him: and she would far rather it was Sybilla to reign than he.

Leolin, still lingering in the garden with his wife, came up in answer to Mrs. Pomeroy's message, unconscious of the trouble that awaited him. It chanced that the French maid was leading the little boy from the room as he approached it, and they met in the corridor. His notice fell on the child; so sickly-looking, so handsome, so like—it struck Leolin at once—his brother Rupert. Ay, and like George, also.

"Why, who are you?" he exclaimed, stopping before them: and the child lifted his large dark blue eyes and answered courteously.

"I am the Lord of Pomeroy."

Leolin laughed slightingly. "Poor child! who has been playing a farce upon you? Who is this boy?" he repeated to the attendant.

"Plaît-il, monsieur?"

Leolin changed his language to hers, which he spoke as a native; as did all the Pomeroys; and repeated the question.

"Monsieur, c'est le Seigneur de Pomeroy."

Turning from them impatiently, he entered the drawing-room, and gazed with amazement at Sybilla, whom he instantly recognised.

"Why, Sybilla! is it you?" he exclaimed. "Have you come back again?"

Mrs. Pomeroy glided up to them. "Leolin, it is the Lady of Pomeroy."

Leolin looked from one to the other with a darkening brow. "The Lady of—what do you say?"

But it was the lady herself—for so we must henceforth call her—who interposed. "Leolin, I am indeed the Lady of Pomeroy; and have been, ever since the fatal night that deprived the abbey of Guy. It was George, you know, to succeed him: Rupert could not."

"Well?" quoth Leolin, wonderingly.

"Well—I was George's wife."

"Wife!" sneered Leolin.

"I was George's wife long before your father died."

"I heard a tale of Sybilla Gaunt's flying from the village with a Pomeroy—after she could no longer stay in it," scoffed Leolin. "But Rupert was indicated as the gallant."

The Lady of Pomeroy confronted him, not giving way to anger, as might have been natural. "I was married to George in the chapel here," she calmly said; "Guy and Rupert became the confidants of the secret, for my husband saw fit to impart it to them; Rupert at the time, Guy later. I did stay here for many months afterwards; and then I joined my husband in Ireland, where the child was born. Rupert came to us there, and stood godfather to the boy."

"It is a forged, got-up ——"

"Stay, Leolin," she interrupted, stopping what was about to follow. "Are the Gaunts capable of falsehood—of imposition? Though my father's patrimony and position have been dwindling down for generations, did you ever know him guilty of a dishonourable word or action? He has yielded obedience to the Lords of Pomeroy, almost as a menial, but he is still the self-conscious descendant of the nobles of the land, and I am his daughter. *You know* that I would tell you nothing but truth. If you please to assume that it is not true, send for Father Andrew to confirm what I say. He married us."

Leolin stood confounded: he had no words of refutation ready.

"I am the Lady of Pomeroy, George's widow," she quietly repeated, "and his child, Rupert, is the lord. I have come back to my fatherland to enter upon my own rights; I have come to the abbey to inhabit it. If I chose to assume my full rights, I should not live in it as the late lord's widow, but as the reigning lady; it can own no other lady than myself, so long as my child, its lord, shall be unmarried. You may perceive that no choice is left me; that for

my child's sake I must do this. But, Leolin, I have said to Mrs. Pomeroy——Where is she?"

The lady turned, and Leolin turned. Mrs. Pomeroy, who was at their side but a moment before, was no longer to be seen. She had silently left the room, though they had not noticed her departure.

"I have not come, Leolin, to stir up a whirlwind. I shall not care to fulfil one part of the Lady of Pomeroy's duties—the receiving guests and the visiting them. I shall require but limited space in the abbey; but—you understand me—I must be its recognised lady: I am content to live in it quietly, unostentatiously, superintending the education and watching the health of my son. Therefore, though you are not, and cannot be, the abbey's lord, I should yet wish that you would live in it at present as the lord's representative. I should wish that you and your wife—whom I hear you have newly wedded—should live in it and do its honours, and enjoy a portion of its revenues, which I will take care that you receive: be, in fact, first and foremost, in all but name. Leolin, you will not guess the feeling that prompts me to say this."

He did not ask her to enlighten him; he stood, as before, with compressed lips.

"I will tell you," she said, sinking her voice to a whisper. "So long as *he* lives, he is the true Lord of Pomeroy. He is, Leolin. Though by one wild action, committed in the heat of passion, he may have forfeited the right to reign, he is the true Lord of Pomeroy; in spite of his being compelled to live in exile, poverty, he is yet the chief of Pomeroy. Nor George, nor our child, nor you, had, or can have, a real title to profit by these advantages while he lives ——"

"How can you give utterance to so absurd a theory?" broke out Leolin, with flashing anger.

"I speak as I feel," she quietly said: "I feel that, in spite of what happened, he is the only legitimate chief of Pomeroy. Had it been premeditated murder, then I grant you, exile, death, would be too good for him: but, you know what it was—a quarrel, a scuffle. Thus I feel that not one of us has more right to enjoy these advantages than another: nay, that you, as the last of them left, save him, have perhaps the most. It was this feeling, as much as his disinclination to leave the army on the eve of war, that prevented my husband coming home to establish himself at Pomeroy: he felt that the right was but a false right, while his unhappy brother lived. My child is the ostensible lord, and must be, for we cannot put away the laws of succession: but, Leolin, do you and your wife remain in the abbey, and keep up its splendour and its gaiety."

Still there came no reply from the displaced lord.

"Another thing," she went on, in a changed tone. "A voice seems to whisper me that should I assume my full rights here, it might only be to resign them to you on the death of my child. I

do not think he will live, Leolin: he was never strong in India, and just before his father died he had fever upon fever, and he has never recovered it. Should he die, as I greatly fear he will, then you are again the Lord of Pomeroy."

"I must repeat that your feeling towards Rupert is unjustifiable; absurdly high-flown.

"It is my feeling," she answered, the blood mantling in her cheeks, "and it was my husband's before me. When he dies, that poor wanderer and exile, why, then I may wish to take rather more upon myself here than I shall now; I may perhaps require that Mrs. Pomeroy shall resign to me these state apartments, which she has continued to occupy. But there's one thing I shall never do, Leolin—and that is, displace you and your wife."

"The poor exile, as you call him—I should rather say the wicked exile—must be dead long ago."

"He is not dead, Leolin."

"Not dead! How do you know it?"

"Because George heard from him just before his own death."

"Where is he? What is he doing?" asked Leolin, with eager emotion.

"I cannot tell you where he is; I do not know. So far as George and I could gather, he moved about from one desert place to another, avoiding those frequented by civilised man. Once he wrote to us from the depths of some unknown prairie in the Pacific; once from a desert wild in Africa. His whole life is spent in contrivances to hide himself from his fellow men.—It must so be spent unto the end"

Leolin sighed. He and Rupert had been reared together; they had shared the same chamber in infancy, the same studies in boyhood, the same sports as young men: in spite of what had happened they were still brothers; and there were moments when Leolin felt for him most deeply.

"We have been thinking him dead," he said. "He has never given us the slightest token that he was not, all these years."

"How could he give it, Leolin? How did he know but that some of you here, in your anger, might seek to bring him to justice? He bound George down to secrecy: I hardly know whether I am justified now in speaking."

"Absurd! We should not be likely to do that."

"*You* would not. But you cannot answer for Mrs. Pomeroy."

Leolin knitted his brow; as if the name, and the associations it called up, angered him.

"Where did you get that carriage with the lord's coat-of-arms?" he abruptly asked, with scant ceremony.

"They are the arms of my child; and his alone. I halted in Paris, for he had there a renewal of his fever. I bought the carriage in Paris, and had the arms placed on it. Leolin, shall it be peace?"

"I don't know what it shall be," roughly returned Leolin, as he turned from the room.

How bitter this blow was to him, he alone knew. In Leolin Pomeroy there had always existed a strong element of selfishness. He was ambitious; fond of state, of position, and of power; fond of money: not for the money in itself, but for the good things it brings. To all this he had attained as Lord of Pomeroy: and to have it dashed from him at one fell blow was almost more than human nature could bear. Is it surprising that a strong feeling of resentment against this new Lady of Pomeroy, and against her child—who seemed, both, to have sprung from the other end of the earth or out of the depths of the sea—should have taken possession of him?

In this mood, he chanced to meet Father Andrew. The good priest, jolly and equable as ever, was walking about in the summer sunshine, on the greensward that skirted the approach to the abbey, thinking of nothing in the world but what Marget was providing for his early supper that night, and hoping it would be a dish of beans and bacon, to which choice delicacy he was particularly partial. He had asked for bacon and beans some days ago, and had not had it yet; Marget—the old-fashioned body who did for him, and who had done for the priest before him—liking to exercise her own opinion in matters. During these agreeable anticipations he found himself suddenly pounced upon by Leolin Pomeroy; who had an awful frown on his face, and laid a fierce grasp on his arm.

"That daughter of John Gaunt—Sybilla. Do you mind me, father?"

"Sure enough I do," spoke the father.

"She has come back here with a tale that you married her to my brother George."

"It is a true tale," replied the priest. "I did marry them."

"Did it lie in the line of your duty, Father Andrew, to unite Sybilla Gaunt to a Pomeroy?" demanded Leolin in a severe tone.

Nothing put out the good-humoured priest: severity fell harmless upon him. He opened his snuff-box, and shovelled out a heap of snuff that would hardly have gone into a table-spoon.

"You know what the Pomeroy will is: George Pomeroy, good-hearted and gentle though he was, possessed it equally with the rest of you. He did not say to me, Will you marry me? he said, Do it. The licence, and all else, was in order, and I had no choice but to obey."

"Without the sanction of friends on either side!" was Leolin's scornful reproach. "Without witnesses?"

"Had there been no witness at all, I might have demurred. Not that any end would have been gained by it. George would only have taken her off to the next town and got married there. But there was a witness—his brother Rupert. Rupert was present; and

to judge by his manner, heartily sanctioned it. And so she has got back, has she!"

Leolin looked the scorn he did not speak. "Do you know that there is a child?—a boy? She has brought the boy with her, whom she calls the Lord of Pomeroy."

"I knew there was a boy: born eleven or twelve months after the marriage. Since poor George's death and your accession, Gaunt and I have sometimes talked over the possible complication——"

"Complication!" wrathfully echoed Leolin. "Was it well, I ask you, father, to conceal so weighty a matter from me?—to let me believe that George left no child?"

"Look here," said the priest, pleasantly. "We knew about the boy, of course; that he was George's heir; but he was always so delicate, and of late so ill, his life hanging by a thread, that we deemed it probable he would not live to trouble you. Upon George's unlooked-for death, Sybilla wrote just a line to her father; it was little more than a line, in her distress; she said that the child was then as ill as he could be, there remained little hope of him; but that all due instructions should be forwarded to Mr. Hildyard. Well, we thought, naturally thought, that Mr. Hildyard, upon receiving these instructions, would acquaint you at once with the fact that there was a little lad who came in as Lord of Pomeroy. Finding that he did not so acquaint you, but, on the contrary, suffered you to enter on the succession, we supposed Hildyard must have received news that the boy was dead. There it is—lying in a nut-shell."

"Whether he was dead or alive, I ought not to have been kept in this total ignorance. You and Gaunt have both behaved ill to me, father."

"Nay, nay, my son, not intentionally. In the uncertainty, as to whether the child was alive or dead, we did not care to speak to you; preferring, rather, to leave it until Sybilla's return, which has long been expected."

"As to Gaunt's conduct throughout the whole business, I cannot find words to express my detestation of it. He has played his cards well! It is explained now why he hesitated to give up the stewardship."

"If you mean that he was a party to the marriage, you are mistaken," said the priest. "Gaunt knew no more of it, or of what was agate, than you did. Your father knew of it before Gaunt knew."

"My father!" exclaimed Leolin, staring at the speaker.

"Ay. I told your father of it on his death-bed. It was, I think, the very day he died. We were talking confidentially, he and I, chiefly about you all, and I saw fit to inform him that I had married George some months before to Sybilla Gaunt. The subject was, in fact, led up to."

"Did my father, dying though he was, explode with passion?"

"Your father sent his blessing to them. With four sons to marry, he said, one of them might as well choose Sybilla, as not. She was a pure, good girl."

"Pure! Good!"

"They were the old lord's words: Sybilla was a pure, good girl; of good descent too; he had always liked her, and she would make George a good wife. George had once told him, it seemed, that he should like to choose Sybilla, and the lord had sanctioned the wish. So George was not guilty of even tacit disobedience, you perceive, though he did not at the time disclose the marriage; in fact, George was about the only one of you who, I am sure, could not be guilty of it."

"My father told you this when he was dying?"

"He did. It was his intention to send for Sybilla that day and personally give her his blessing; but death came on too quickly."

"And, with all this approbation—which sounds as though it came out of a romance—will you tell me why it was needful to continue to make a secret of the marriage?" sarcastically asked Leolin. "They might have declared it, as it seems to me."

"I will tell you why they did not," returned the priest. "Your brother George had paid rather too much attention to his colonel's daughter, or she to him: George declared it was the latter, and I think it likely; he was a handsome fellow, you know. He found, to his consternation, that she expected him to ask for her in marriage: but he cared a great deal too much for Sybilla to do that. He told me that he had hastened his marriage with Sybilla out of sheer fear that Miss Dillon would get a promise from him in some weak moment, and he should find himself compelled to marry her. That's why he kept his marriage a secret—lest it should reach the colonel's ears—for a man, you see, likes to stand well with his colonel. Miss Dillon went with her father to India, obliging George—as he considered—still to keep the secret: or, at any rate, not to declare it publicly. Most of his brother officers knew it."

"George was always a coward in some things," remarked Leolin.

"In what things was he a coward?" rather warmly asked the priest. "George was as brave and good a fellow as ever bent knee to shrine."

"In the matter of hurting other people's feelings. I've known him walk four miles round, rather than pass the cottage of some ill-doing serf here, whom he had been obliged to blow up. And witness his never coming home, as lord, out of consideration for that miserable wanderer, Rupert."

"Ah," said the priest musingly, a far-off look in his eyes. "But if there were more men like George Pomeroy, the world would be better than it is. I have never known anyone so unselfish."

Leolin turned back to the house. Father Andrew, solacing himself with another liberal portion of snuff, continued his walk, the far-off look of speculation in his genial eyes. Which speculation might either concern the Pomeroy family, or the problematic treat of bacon and beans.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WARNING TO LEOLIN.

Leolin Pomeroy shut himself up in his library, there to brood over the startling news that the day had brought him. It was a most unpleasant position to be placed in. Had he been single, he might possibly have felt it less: though to be suddenly cut down from his honour and dignity as Lord of Pomeroy, was a mortification of which he could not yet realise the full bitterness. His mind was in a chaos: he could not tell what course to pursue, or how best to neutralise the blow. Could he deny the marriage—affect to ignore it as a thing that had never had place? No; that might not be easy: any hope of that kind might prove a vain one. But—could he not get it annulled and all its consequences with it? His eye lighted, and his heart warmed within him at the thought: for he knew how great was the influence of the Lords of Pomeroy at the court of the Vatican. And he, as reigning lord—what vain fancy was he revelling in? —this child was the Lord of Pomeroy, himself lord no longer. Leolin Pomeroy, with a sharp word and a groan, bent his head on the table in gloomy discontent.

He knew not how long he remained thus. A gentle hand stole round his neck and aroused him. His wife put up her other hand, and laid her face upon his.

"Leolin, my dearest, why need you care?" she whispered. "I am only thankful that it did not happen before now, or they might have refused me to you."

His face flushed. "Anna—what are you speaking of? what have you heard?"

"I have heard all—that you are not the Lord of Pomeroy, and that this beautiful abbey is not our own home——"

"No," he interrupted. "Enemies are trying to wrest it from us."

"But, Leolin, we may laugh at them: they cannot separate us."

"How did you learn the news?"

"Mrs. Pomeroy came to the garden and told me."

Leolin Pomeroy very nearly swore at Mrs. Pomeroy. "My wife, my wife! it is for your sake that I could curse the tidings."

She kissed away the words, her cheeks blushing, her shy eyes drooping. "Oh, Leolin, my darling, they may take everything from me but you."

He raised her face and made her look at him, made her meet the full bent of his loving gaze. "I am now but Leolin Pomeroy."

"I married Leolin Pomeroy; I married you; Leolin, my husband, my best-beloved!"

"I don't believe they can take it from us," spoke Leolin. "There must be some mistake—some flaw. I am sure of it."

"Flaw in what?" she asked. "In the marriage of this lady who has just come here? Do you mean that, Leolin?"

"I do. And I will take very good care to search it out and prove it."

"Oh, but, Leolin, you will not seek to do anything harsh or wrong," she pleaded. "If this little boy is by right the Lord of Pomeroy, you must not try to displace him. It would not bring happiness to you or to me."

"It would prevent the unhappiness that seems to be threatening us."

"If this little child is what they say he is, your brother George's son, he must be the true Lord of Pomeroy," she urged. "And oh, Leolin, it will be *right* that he should enjoy his own; right in God's sight."

"You don't understand the case, Anna," said Leolin, some annoyance in his tone.

"No, dear, I daresay not; I am not wise. I only understand this much—that the wealth and the grandeur we thought were our own, are not so. But we can be quite as happy in a cottage home as in this great abbey—if you can only think so."

"But I can't think so, Lady of Pomeroy."

"Nay, Leolin, pray do not call me *that*. Yes—I suppose you said it but in jest. Let us be just—*please*—to this little lad and his mother; and generous as well as just. I am quite sure," she added in a shrinking tone, "that as we act by others, so shall we ourselves be acted by in return: that is one of the unalterable decrees of heaven. Papa has ever taught me so."

Leolin broke off the conversation. His wife's ideas upon the matter seemed to him hardly worth refuting. Leolin Pomeroy meant to act; not argue.

Meanwhile he found himself obliged (as a temporary thing) to submit to adverse fate. Upon no plea could he declare that the marriage had been illegal, and for the present this new Lady of Pomeroy must remain at the abbey. Were he to attempt to put her forth, she might call the powers of the law to bear, and Leolin would certainly be worsted.

"And what in the world, Alice, is the truth of this strange report that I hear?" demanded a short, stout ball of a woman, plunging unceremoniously that self-same evening into the drawing-room of Mrs. Pomeroy.

Alice rose and offered her a chair. Mrs. Wylde sank into it—

and it was Mrs. Wylde, though the reader may fail at this first moment to recognise her. For Mrs. Wylde has been growing stouter and stouter all these years, and shorter in proportion, until she now looks like nothing but a round dumpling. And her face gets red, and she seems ever in a flurry: but her attire is not less gay than of yore, and as she sits down now she unties her white satin bonnet-strings, and begins fanning herself with a painted fan that has some real pearls embedded in its handle. At the other end of the room, playing at fox-and-goose on a little ivory board, sat Mary Pomeroy and her governess, Miss Lorne.

"I was at my dinner," resumed Mrs. Wylde, giving no time for her daughter to speak, "Cannet waiting upon me as usual, when he was called out of the room—Whittaker the keeper wanted him about that fence of mine that was damaged. 'Have you heard the news, ma'am?' says Cannet to me, when he came in again; 'there's a report that a new lord has appeared at Abbeyland to displace Mr. Leolin.' Of course I asked the man what he meant, and who the new lord was—thinking Cannet must have been drinking: but he persisted in his tale, and I came off to see. And now what is it, Alice—anything or nothing?"

Alice explained. The new lord was a little fellow of nearly eight years old, George's son. And his mother was Sybilla Gaunt, who had been so much aspersed in the days gone by.

Mrs. Wylde lifted her head with a jerk, causing the white plumes on her bonnet to vibrate. She could be very indignant when she liked; and she was so now. "Sybilla Gaunt!"

So Mrs. Pomeroy explained further. *That* had been all a mistake. Sybilla was—and there could be no doubt about it—the Lady of Pomeroy. She had been George Pomeroy's wife from the first—and some of the Pomeroys had known it all along, and the old lord had sanctioned it.

Mrs. Wylde could find no words to express her feelings. Fanning herself violently, the feathers shook again. In the midst of the stormy silence, Miss Mary Pomeroy, having lost the game at fox-and-goose, upset the dainty board with a crash and sprang forward.

"What have you come here for so late as this, grandmamma?"

"I came to see your mamma. And I think it high time that little girls should be in bed."

"I am not ready to go to bed yet," said Mary. "Miss Lorne promised me two games at fox-and-goose to-night, and we have only played one. Grandmamma, do you know that Uncle Leolin is no more the Lord of Pomeroy?"

"Only to hear of such a thing exasperates *me*," said Mrs Wylde.

"It is Uncle Leolin who is exasperated," returned the child in her old-wise fashion; and, in truth, she sometimes made comments that seemed wonderful. "But, you know, as my Cousin Rupert *is* the

young lord, he must be so, in spite of Uncle Leolin. Rupert's mother is to be the new lady, too, and mamma says she likes her better than Lady Anna. I like her too, and I let her kiss me: and I like Rupert."

Mrs. Wylde felt very much tempted to give *her* opinion of the young lord, and especially of his mother, but the young lady's presence prevented that. She tilted her bonnet and fanned her red face violently.

Households were organised at the abbey. Mrs. Pomeroy retained her own rooms; Leolin and his wife retained theirs; the Lady of Pomeroy established herself in the south wing. Until, as she had intimated, tidings should reach them of the true lord's death: when she might feel it incumbent upon her to make a change. Anything more absurd than this chivalrous notion of hers, towards Rupert, Leolin thought had never been entertained by mortal woman.

Seated in one of the rooms of the south wing—which wing was being newly renovated—was the Lady of Pomeroy in her gossamer widow's cap; and with her her sister-in-law, Joan. Tidings of the strange complications which had arisen, in the appearance of this little lad, Rupert, were written by Leolin to his sister Joan, who was then staying on the Continent with Mr. and Mrs. Capel. As soon as she conveniently could, Joan returned to England and came on to the abbey. She was looking older than her years justified: the dreadful death of Guy, the stain upon the name of Pomeroy, which that death and the circumstances conducing to it entailed, had told upon Joan. It was an ever-present trouble which could not be lifted.

Twice, during the years which had intervened, had Joan Pomeroy sojourned at the abbey; not with Mrs. Pomeroy, but visiting (so to express it) the absent lord; staying in his apartments, waited on by his servants. Her chief motive, in coming, was to see Guy's child, of whom she was very fond. *This* time, she stayed with Sybilla. Unlike Leolin, she warmly embraced the new changes at once: welcomed Sybilla as a sister; loved at first sight the little lord, Rupert. For a long while past now, Joan had felt convinced, that whatever might be the mystery attending the disappearance of Sybilla, no disgrace could attach to her.

"But still I maintain that you acted unwisely, Sybilla," she was saying this day, when they were conversing on the past. "I now understand George's motives for secrecy; it was right to respect them; but to his own family and to your father he might have declared the truth. As he did not, you ought to have done so—for your own sake."

"When a chance word is dropped, it so easily spreads itself, and it would have put George all wrong with his colonel," replied Sybilla. "Over and over again, during that trying period when I was waiting here to join my husband, have I felt tempted to speak.

Next to deceiving my dear father, the greatest trouble I had to bear was that you could think ill of me."

"You might have made your father an exception and told him of the intended marriage."

Sybilla shook her head. "In his fealty to your family, he might have deemed it his duty to stop it: in his love for me, he might have insisted that I should be married openly, or not at all. George and I talked it over anxiously, and he decided that it would not be prudent to speak. All the arrangements were George's; I fell in with them; but I did beg of him to at least tell you, and he would not."

"You cared for George very much, I suppose?"

A deep blush stole to Sybilla's beautiful face. "No one, save himself, knew how much, or ever will know, Joan. As to George, I believe he had loved me from the time I was a girl of fifteen or sixteen; and his frequent visits here, after he joined the army, were made for my sake. The marriage was not kept an entire secret, Joan: as soon as my father knew of it he insisted upon its being disclosed in confidence to the Lady Abbess and Sister Mildred. Father Andrew went over and told them."

Joan Pomeroy abstractedly stroked her black silk gown: her thoughts were cast back to the past. "They always seemed to take, tacitly, your part at the convent, Sybilla. I remarked that."

"They had known me for a modest maiden, who strove to be good and to do my duty humbly before heaven; and they could not believe, even before they were enlightened, that I should suddenly become unworthy," spoke Sybilla earnestly, but half laughingly and wholly blushing. "Well, it was hard to bear, I say, the world's condemnation; but I would go through it all again for my dear husband's sake."

"I saw Mr. Hildyard as I came through London," Joan was resuming, when Sybilla interrupted her.

"The letter from India, that was lost," she asked eagerly: "has he heard of it?"

"He says he has never seen it or heard of it."

"How can that be?"

"Mr. Hildyard is a thoroughly truthful man, Sybilla."

"Oh, yes; I know that. Only it is strange that letter should have miscarried, when the letter to my father, posted with it, arrived safely."

"You are sure the other was posted?"

"Certain. Moore, George's confidential servant, mine now, posted them himself. Major Barkley was with him at the time."

"Major Barkley? George's great friend—was he not?"

"The greatest friend he had in the world. It was Major Barkley who wrote the letter—which was full of confidential details—to Mr. Hildyard. A short note, penned by George in his dying hour, was also enclosed in it."

"Letters do get lost unaccountably sometimes," observed Joan. "It was an unfortunate thing in this instance, on account of Leolin."

"Very, very unfortunate," murmured Sybilla. "His feeling towards me is not a kind one. And he has never seen my father since my return."

"He will get over that," said Joan calmly. "Disappointments of that nature require time to soften them. But, Sybilla, speaking of your father—what is it I hear about his sickness?"

Close upon the arrival of Sybilla as Lady of Pomeroy, John Gaunt was taken seriously ill. He had been ailing for some time previously, but had not paid much attention to it. Upon getting worse, he sent for Mr. Norris. The doctor stood aghast at the symptoms displayed: they were most ominous. Since then Gaunt had been in bed, slowly dying. Dr. Bill came every other day from Owlstone, and Sybilla passed much of her time at the lodge.

"Does he fear, himself, that it may terminate fatally?" breathed Joan.

"He knows it, Joan: fear it, I am sure he does not. He said to me yesterday, 'It seems, my dear, as if God had only spared me just to see you return with your little son!' And, when I burst into tears, he bade me remember that our true home was not here, but in that blessed place to which we were all hastening."

"I should like to see him," said Joan gently. "You must let me go with you this afternoon."

But, ere the afternoon had well set in, the abbey was disturbed by a message from the keeper's lodge. Gaunt was dying. It was the doctor who brought it. He first of all apprised the Lady of Pomeroy, and then made his way to Leolin. The latter, lingering in moodiness at one of the front windows, had watched the doctor to the abbey.

"What a strapping pace you came at, Norris!" was his greeting. "Were you walking for a wager?"

"John Gaunt is dying; he will not, I fear, live through the day," was the surgeon's grave answer. "He wishes you to go and see him."

"I will not go," replied Leolin.

In the course of the day Leolin had another appeal—this time from Father Andrew. For once in his life the priest's good-humoured face was more serious than a judge's.

"Don't let Gaunt die, my son, asking for you in vain. He is most anxious to see you. The wishes of the dying should be held sacred. What has Gaunt done to you?"

"What has he not done?" retorted Leolin. "Been in a conspiracy to wrest my lawful inheritance from me."

'That is just your erroneous way of looking at matters. Your brother George's marriage and the birth of this son wrests, as you

term it, the inheritance from you. Gaunt knew nothing of the marriage."

"Surely, Father Andrew, you need not take Gaunt's part to my face?"

"I take the part of common sense. Gaunt's behaviour throughout has been admirable—yes, Leolin, I repeat it, *admirable.* Look how some men, knowing, all these past years, that their daughter was Lady of Pomeroy, would have presumed upon it! But has Gaunt ever presumed? Has he not been modest, retiring, reticent? Never putting himself forward in any shape or form? No, Leolin, Gaunt has never injured you, or sought to do so."

"*I won't see him,*" said Leolin. "That's the second denial I have sent him to-day. Let him content himself with his grandson."

"A brave little fellow, the young lord, if they can only get some flesh upon his bones," remarked the priest, opening his snuff-box as he retired and left Leolin to his obstinacy: for "a wilful man must have his way."

But at the twilight hour, when softness unconsciously steals over us, Leolin repented of his obduracy and set out for the lodge. He had already reached the turning to it when he saw the priest come forth.

"Is he worse, father?"

"Only in so far as that he is weaker—and, my son, I am glad to see you here. He will not last out the night: and I am on my way to prepare and bring him the last sacraments."

John Gaunt, soon to be no more, lay on his bed, the dew-drops of coming death already rising on his once noble face—a face sadly worn and weakened now. A lively expression of gratitude, of welcome, illumined it as Leolin entered. The young lord leaned on the bed by his grandfather's side, half in fear, half in curiosity; Sybilla sat at a little distance; Joan was in the next room.

"I could not die without seeing you," began Gaunt, holding out both his hands to clasp Leolin's. "This late estrangement on your part has been very painful to me. I feel that I have not deserved it No one has been more grieved than I have that the child should put you out—but it lies not in my power, or in anyone's power, to alter it."

Leolin muttered something that was inaudible, and drew away his hand.

"You are the only brother left of the four," spoke Gaunt again, after getting up his breath. "You will protect my daughter and her child—George's child."

"I will not recognise the child as Lord of Pomeroy," deliberately replied Leolin.

"He is the Lord of Pomeroy, whether you recognise him or not," panted Gaunt. "I was not speaking of their rights; they are beyond your power to disturb; I was thinking of kindness. George, Lord of Pomeroy, is dead; by to-morrow I shall be dead; and none

will be near to afford them protection or to whisper a word of comfort, but you."

"The boy would wrest my inheritance from me, usurp that of my children," sullenly repeated Leolin, who in truth thought no man had ever been so wronged as himself. "I tell you openly—for I disdain to work in a corner—that I do not consider my brother George's marriage was proper or legal; and I will do what I can to get it annulled."

Gaunt, struggling with his weakness, and with a feeling of aversion to these sentiments, of almost horror that they should be avowed by any man pretending to be a Christian, and that man one of the Pomeroys whom he had reverenced and done his best to serve, lifted his head from the pillow and supported himself on his left elbow. He solemnly raised the other hand in a warning attitude, and spoke in a tone that thrilled through those who listened to him.

"Beware, Leolin Pomeroy. For your own sake, I pray you, beware. You cannot sin deliberately before heaven, and be unvisited for it."

"Let *him* beware," returned Leolin, standing with his arms proudly folded, and glancing at Rupert. "This little usurper."

"One sad judgment has already fallen on your family," breathed Gaunt; "do not you act so as to provoke another. *As you deal by this child, so may you be prosperous in your own children!*—and take heed how you despise the warning of a dying man."

He fell back panting. The Lady of Pomeroy rose to administer some reviving drops; and Leolin Pomeroy, frightfully disturbed, went forth into the night air.

(*To be continued.*)

DOWN IN A TIN MINE.

AT 9 a.m. one September morning I knocked at the door of the "Count House," which stands near the main shaft of a tin mine in Cornwall.

On all sides of me were the busy signs of mining industry—the drawing engine, that winds up the raw tinstuff from the depths of the mine; the stamp batteries, which crush the ore to a fine, almost impalpable mud; the buddles, on which this mud is again and again sorted by the action of water till nothing but pure tinstuff, worth about £90 a ton, remains; and the huge pumping engine setting in motion some 250 tons of material at every stroke of the great piston.

On the threshold of the office I was met by my excellent friend Captain R., who grasped me warmly by the hand, welcomed me to Wheal——, and asked me whether I felt inclined for a dive underground. I assured him that I had come with the express object of seeing the mine under his guidance. We agreed to waste no time, and in ten minutes I was arrayed in miner's costume of thick flannel; my feet were cased in heavy nailed boots; on my head I placed a close-fitting linen cap, and over that a hard-crowned hat, on which a tallow candle was stuck by means of a large lump of clay. A spare candle hanging from a button on the breast of my coat completed my attire.

As we walked towards the main shaft, and I was just considering the effect I should produce were I to stroll into one of the fashionable London clubs in my present costume, we were joined by a miner going to his work.

After a few commonplaces he turned to me and said: "Yes, sir! it's about two years since I was walking to this very shaft—just as I may be walking with you, sir—along with as fine a young fellow as you ever saw. We parted at surface—he went down the shaft, I went to work further west. That poor fellow, sir, never came up alive—we suppose he went and mixed himself up with the pump gear somehow. Leastwise a leg of him was found at the '45' and the rest of his body at the shaft bottom."

To anyone who loves light and cleanliness there is something peculiarly depressing in descending a mine. Your solitary dip serves but to make the darkness visible. The firm grip you are obliged to take of the iron spokes of the ladder makes the dirt only too tangible, while there is something undignified too in descending backwards you know not whither.

For some time I went down step by step in a slow and methodical fashion, gazing helplessly between the staves of the ladder, and

wondering whether we were getting near New Zealand. After a while, however, I felt a longing desire to try and take a hurried glance downwards to gaze into the darkness below me, and to see how my legs were getting on. I did so. The consequence of this rash act was that my candle fell from its perch on my hat, and disappeared into the darkness below, coming down with a dull thud on to the next stage or "sollar."

When we reached that sollar I soon perceived that the glory of my candle had departed—clay and tallow were mixed together in one confused mash, in which with the greatest difficulty I discovered a small portion of the wick, which after much coaxing consented to light. Resolving, however, not to be beaten, I battered the mass on my hat and declared myself ready to continue the descent.

The only thing which was calculated to make me nervous during the descent of the next two or three ladders was that the pump rod was working up and down within about three inches of my right shoulder, creaking and groaning at each stroke in the most melancholy fashion. Vivid pictures of "getting mixed up with the pump gear" arose before my troubled mind, and I imagined the grief I should feel at parting with one of my legs at the "45."

"Keep your body well over to the left," sang out Captain R. from about ten feet below me.

"All right," I gasped. I had, however, forestalled the advice, and was almost dislocating my left shoulder against the hard dirty rock, in my efforts to get as far as possible from the great square pump rod which was moving with such pitiless regularity at my side.

All my attention being thus occupied, my legs suddenly began, as I thought (to use a nautical phrase), to go off on a new tack. I dared not again look down, and trusted to Providence to find them again. I soon discovered, to my relief, that the unpleasant effect was produced by a sudden change in the position of the ladder from an inclination of about seventy degrees to perpendicularity. My body, therefore, soon rejoined my legs, and I found myself on another landing stage.

"Now then, sir," said my friend, "this is the '110;' there are some capital stopes to the west of where we are, which I should like you to see. But let me first look to your candle."

I felt truly grateful for this piece of attention. During the last quarter of an hour my wretched dip had ceased to do anything but sputter and smell without giving any light. In skilful hands, however, it was soon resuscitated, and we walked off along a narrow gallery or level, about seven feet high, and well boxed in with timber. This I learnt was one hundred and ten fathoms "below adit," or about one hundred and thirty-five below the surface. A stream of dirty water ran along the bottom between two iron rails for the tram-waggons, on which the ore is carried from the place where it is broken to the shaft.

Captain R. walked on through the dirty water as naturally as if he had been treading on a Turkey carpet (or, perhaps more so). I followed in admiring silence, and had just got my boots comfortably wet through, when my friend, taking hold of a rusty iron chain, said, "Now then, sir, follow me," and, half hanging by the chain, half supporting himself on any projecting pieces of rock which might afford foothold, dived down into a dismal cavern, at the bottom of which a solitary candle flickered and flared. I was to follow! I mentally bade adieu to the bright world I had been rash enough to leave, and taking hold of the dirty old rusted chain, swung helplessly from side to side for a while, and at length, in answer to "Now then, sir, drop," found myself in about four inches of mud.

This melancholy spot was, I was told, an underhand stope let "on tribute"—that is, the men received so much (in this case about four shillings) out of every pound's-worth of ore sold.

Two men were working here. They formed part of a "pare" of six, each couple of whom work for a shift of eight hours. One of these fellows was holding and slowly turning a steel boring rod, on which his mate delivered well-aimed blows with a heavy hammer.

On seeing us the men stopped work, and observing that I was a stranger, one of them, a tall strong man, whose thick breathing and husky voice told a tale of hard labour in close foul air, plucked off his linen cap, and commenced scrubbing away at my boots, telling me that most men meant by that operation that they expected the stranger to pay his footing, but that *he* only did it to show his pleasure at seeing a gentleman in his pitch. I was quite touched by this mark of respect, and promptly handed over to the good fellow a coin, which I had been careful to slip into my pocket before I left the world.

"Now, sir, look here," cried Captain R., "there's splendid work." As he said this he waved his candle backwards and forwards in front of the ground in which the men were boring.

"It is indeed wonderful. I replied, enthusiastically, gazing at what was to all appearances a particularly dirty piece of rock.

My friend, however, enlightened my ignorance, by pointing out thin brown resinous-looking strings running through the rock, which he told me were tin stone, from which the bright shining block-tin of commerce is obtained. The presence of these made the rock, in Cornish phrase, good work.

The men now improvised a seat for me, consisting of the handle of a heavy hammer, which, though rather hard and sharp, was very acceptable.

"Well, sir, you never had a piece of climbing like coming down that chain before, I expect!" said Captain R.

"Well, not exactly like that perhaps," I said, "but on a mountain in Switzerland, the Matterhorn, where an iron chain has lately been

put up, there is something similar. There, however, when I was on the mountain a few months ago, the rocks were glazed with a thin coating of ice, my gloves froze to the iron chain the moment I grasped it, while below me a snow slope led gently to a precipice some thousands of feet deep."

I then described the ascent of a steep wall of ice on the Col du Géant, which had to be effected by climbing up the shoulders of a herculean porter, and then being pulled at the end of a rope over a steep little piece of snow slope like a bale of goods. In fact, I laughed at calling the descent by the chain that hung above us climbing at all; but, in truth, all the while I was in a state of nervous trepidation, wondering if I should ever get up into that dirty level again. I managed it, however, and in five minutes my friend and I again stood in the dirty water of the "110."

"Now I think we'll get away to the '130' by this winze," said my good conductor, after a few minutes' breathing space, as he opened a trap-door and proceeded to squeeze some fourteen stone through a hole about a foot and a half square.

"Lead, and I follow," I answered meekly.

Down, down we went, the rickety old ladder creaking with our weight.

"Hullo!" I cried, as I suddenly found one of my legs feeling vaguely about in empty space. "Hullo! where's the ladder gone to?"

"Put your foot further west," bawled Captain R. from below.

"Oh yes, further west," I replied, this observation conveying about as much to my mind as it would to a kangaroo of ordinary intelligence. After a minute of anxiety, during which time my leg was waving gracefully about, I called out with seeming indifference, "By the way, which leg?" At this moment, however, I solved the question myself by bringing my left leg with considerable force in contact with the missing ladder, which was some little distance to the left of the one I was on. Descending this, I joined my friend at the "130."

"Be careful here, sir," he observed; "there are about fifteen fathoms of 'bottoms' excavated below us;" and at once walked off along a narrow board, black darkness yawning below him. When he had passed, he kindly turned and threw the dim light of his candle on the narrow bridge, while I, with a curious sinking sensation near that part of my body which a waistcoat ought to have covered, crept slowly and steadily over.

We had only advanced a few fathoms further, and I was just congratulating myself on having passed over those "bottoms" in safety, and determining not to trust myself again to that board, if I had to live the rest of my days in the "130 W," when our lights were both extinguished, and a noise, as if a dozen "Woolwich infants" were being fired off at once, seemed to stun me.

"What's that?" I cried. "Has the mine blown up?" My first

impulse being to drown myself in the three inches of mud which lay in the bottom of the level.

"That, sir, is the effect of dynamite," said the Captain, who seemed to treat the affair as a matter of course. "The men have just blasted a hole in the end. We shan't be able to go in there now, as the place will be full of smoke. I think we had better avoid it by going down this winze."

Accordingly we dived through another trap-door, in shutting which I completely finished off my candle, and then proceeded by a series of ladders almost to the bottom of the mine. Here some splendid tinstuff was being worked on tut-work, by which system the men receive so many pounds (in this case as much as £20, as the ground was very hard and the air close) for every fathom they drive. The miners were working bare to the waist, and well they might: the heat was terrific, a thermometer stood at 96 deg. Fahr. Whenever I *think* of that spot I nearly faint. One old miner here, however, told me that it was "what he called warm," but that he once worked in a *hot* place. This was in the United Mines; cold water had to be continually poured over the men as they worked, and not unfrequently one of their number was taken with a dead faint, and had to be carried to the nearest tank. I mentally resolved not to visit the United Mines.

After staying here about ten minutes, we prepared to start upwards, Captain R. proposing to visit *en route* some of the workings of the "old men," as the miners of days gone by are termed. One great feature of these workings was a place where a huge irregular deposit of tin-stone had been worked away for more than twenty fathoms in height.

We were erelong standing and endeavouring to pierce the smoke and darkness which filled this gloomy cavern, I in front, and Captain R. some few feet behind me. Suddenly a drop of water falling from above extinguished my candle (a new one which had only been put out about ten times before). Immediately a weird phantom figure stood before us in the thick gloom of the huge excavation. Raising my arm, I pointed this out to my companion. He was astonished; I will not say frightened. The figure stood motionless with outstretched arm. Captain R. advanced towards me; the figure grew, and seemed to approach us, till it filled the whole excavation. My friend, with no very steady hand, lit my candle; at once the phantom vanished, as if by the wave of a magician's wand. The explanation of the appearance of this ghost, as of most ghosts, was of course simple. The phantom was nothing more than my shadow projected on the thick smoky air by my friend's candle. I explained this to the good Captain, but he shook his head doubtfully, and evidently thought that, whatever the reason or the cause might be, "the old men's workings were uncanny places."

We now made our way to the shaft by one of the old men's levels

—a narrow gallery about four feet high—along which I had to shuffle in a doubled-up posture, like an S suffering from indigestion. Here and there a thick beam of timber was thrown across the top to "keep the ground abroad." I had the satisfaction of knocking myself down into about a foot of slushy mud by running my head against one of these pieces of timber—had I not been protected by my miner's hat I should probably have had the additional pleasure of knocking out my own brains. As it was we reached the main shaft again in safety, and Captain R. here expressed his sorrow at having nothing more to show me. I manifested great grief, and felt extreme joy. All that now remained was to crawl to surface.

I had not particularly enjoyed the descent by perpendicular ladders. I positively disliked the ascent. And yet in nearly all our Cornish mines the miners have to struggle to surface up such ladders, after a hard day's work. The pull on a man's strength to climb by ladder some hundred or hundred and fifty fathoms is enormous. In some of our deepest mines, however, man-engines to take the men to and from their work have been introduced.

We had, however, to trust to our own strength to land us at surface, and when, wet and dirty, we set foot above ground, one of us at least was heartily glad to see once more the light of day.

SPRING.

Hush, listen a moment! I hear her,
  The sound of her footsteps sweet;
'Tis only the patter of raindrops,
  With a tincture of scorn you repeat;
But I, ah, I know much better—
  'Tis the sound of my lady's feet.

I caught the gleam of her garments,
  Purple and gold in a glow;
'Twas only the leaves of a crocus,
  You say, peeping up thro' the snow;
But I have a finer fancy—
  'Twas the dress of my lady, I know.

I felt her breath on my forehead,
  Her voice in the glade I heard;
What is it you mutter of flowers,
  And the twit of some tiny bird?
My lady is coming—yes, coming,
  And I will not believe one word!

A. E. G.

SNATCHED FROM THE BRINK.

TIME—five o'clock on a sultry September afternoon; the air is close and oppressive, the sky covered with clouds that threaten storm. Scene—the pleasant shady flower-scented drawing-room of a pretty old-fashioned house in a suburban road just outside the town of Leamington.

The room has two occupants, one of whom—the middle-aged lady presiding at a dainty little "five o'clock tea" table—is the present writer, Miss Catherine Dane. The tall, dark-eyed girl in white, who stands at the open lawn window, is my niece Sidney, the motherless child of my brother Colonel Dane, now in India, but shortly expected home on sick leave.

"Don't you want any tea, Sidney?"

Sidney is in a brown study, and I have to ask the question twice before she comes to the surface with a start.

"Tea? oh, is it ready?" she answers absently, and moving from the window, subsides into a chair near the table. "I was looking for the postman. He is late this afternoon."

"Do you expect a letter from India by the mail that is just in?"

"Yes, I daresay papa will write."

"We shall have him with us before Christmas, I suppose?"

"I suppose so," she assented.

Her tone was certainly not one of joyful anticipation, and the words were followed by a suppressed sigh. It pained but did not surprise me to hear it, for I had discovered long ago that Sidney dreaded her father's return, though for what reason I could not even conjecture. The girl was almost as much a stranger to me now as she had been six months before, when first I received her beneath my roof. My brother had written to me requesting me to take charge of her till he returned to England, as her health required immediate change of climate. I readily consented, but soon found it was no light responsibility I had accepted; I had neither power nor influence over the haughty, headstrong girl, who knew no law but her own will, who accepted homage as a right, and repelled sympathy as an impertinence. In spite of her faults, however, I had learned to love my niece, and her waywardness and caprice only served to add compassion to my affection: for some instinct told me that they were but the outward signs of a deeper ill, a heart oppressed by some hidden trouble, and a nature at war with itself.

What could the trouble be? Anxiously I asked myself the question as, after hearing that significant sigh, I watched her clouded face. But the beautiful face kept her secret and told me nothing.

A sound of carriage-wheels approaching swiftly along the road

caused Sidney to desist from her idle occupation of breaking a biscuit into fragments, and look towards the window. The next moment there swept into sight a pony carriage-and-pair containing three ladies, two young, and one (who was driving) very youthfully dressed—and a gentleman, a handsome soldierly looking man of thirty, with bold dark eyes, and a sweeping tawny moustache. The ladies, catching sight of Sidney, kissed their hands to her effusively, and the gentleman raised his hat, as the carriage dashed by and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

"Were those the Lightwoods?" I inquired, as she turned from the window, her cheeks flushed, her eyes unusually bright.

"Yes, they have been to the flower-show. Mrs. Lightwood has a rival exhibition in her bonnet. Did you notice it?"

"Her brother, Captain Forrester, is staying with them still, I see."

Sidney only nodded in reply as she handed me her cup to be replenished.

"How long are they likely to remain at Leamington?" I asked.

"I don't know I'm sure. Mrs. Lightwood took a house for three months, I believe; they have been here more than two already."

"Did you know them very intimately in India?"

"Well, yes, I used to visit them very often when they were living at Madras. The widow, Mrs. Lightwood, has always professed a geat affection for me, though I fancy she——But that reminds me, Aunt Catherine," she broke off, leaving the first sentence unfinished; "they are going to have a little dance to-night, and they have invited me."

"Again!" I exclaimed. "Do you know that you have been there no fewer than six times during the last fortnight?"

"What an accurate reckoning you have kept!" she returned laughingly. "Well, to-night will be the seventh time, for I am going——with your permission of course."

The last clause was so evidently pro formâ that it would have been almost more gracious to have omitted it altogether.

"I wish Mrs. Lightwood would not keep up her 'little dances' to such a late, or rather, early hour," I replied; "and I am sure, Sidney, that so much waltzing is not good for you, with your weak heart."

"Particularly when my partner is Captain Forrester," she added, looking at me with a half smile. "You had better be candid, Aunt Catherine; you know it is not the dance, but the partner you object to."

"I object to both; the partner chiefly, perhaps."

"I wonder why?" drawled Sidney, lazily examining her fan.

I was provoked into answering plainly.

"Because he is a bold, unprincipled, dangerous man. That is why, Sidney."

She flushed, and seemed about to make an angry reply; but,

thinking better of it, answered coldly, after a pause: "I daresay he is very much like other men: neither better nor worse."

"I should be sorry to think my circle of acquaintance included many men of his stamp," I observed.

"Oh! I am sure it does not," she returned, with a little laugh; "you may be quite easy on that score, Aunt Catherine."

"And I should be still more sorry," I went on, ignoring her remark, "if I thought that he could ever be more to you than a mere acquaintance. Heaven help you, Sidney, if you bestowed your heart on such a man!"

She shut her fan, and looked up with a sudden change of expression.

"Bestow my heart!" she echoed, in a tone half angry, half scornful. "You talk as if hearts were 'bestowed,' like prizes, as a reward for merit; as if love were a thing to be given or withheld, subject to the approval of parents or guardians. It does not occur to you that a woman's heart may be won in spite of her?—that she may love against her will, against her judgment, against her duty——"

She stopped abruptly, and the colour rushed over her face.

"What rubbish we are talking!" she concluded with a shrug, as she rose and returned to her old post at the window. A few minutes afterwards the front gate closed behind the postman, who advanced up the winding drive towards the house. Somewhat to my surprise—for she had her full share of Anglo-Indian laziness—Sidney gave herself the trouble to go and meet him, took a letter from his hand, and returned slowly across the lawn, a tall, elegant figure, in trailing summer draperies, with a yellow rose in her dark hair.

"A letter for you, Aunt Cathie," she said, "with the Southampton post-mark. It——why—good heavens!——"

The words died on her lips; she stood looking blankly at the letter in her hand.

"What is it?" I asked. "What is the matter?"

"It is papa's handwriting!" she answered, in a whisper of amazement.

"And the Southampton post-mark!" I exclaimed, and hastily tore it open, Sidney looking over my shoulder as I read.

"Radley's Hotel, Southampton, September 6th.

"My dear Catherine—You will see, from the heading of this, that I am already in England. I landed from the *Cheetah* last night, and I should have been with you to-day (Tuesday); but my old wound in the shoulder has broken out afresh, and will keep me prisoner here, the doctor says, for the next forty-eight hours at least, if not for several days. I have just learned that the Lightwoods are living in Leamington, and that Mrs. L.'s brother, that scamp, Fred Forrester, is with them. Sidney has never mentioned their names in her letters to me; but I have no doubt that, in spite of my express prohibi-

tion, she has renewed the acquaintance which was broken off before she left India. I have now a still stronger reason to object to the intimacy: and I trust to you, Catherine, to see that she does not set foot in their house, or hold any sort of communication with them, till I come. I reserve explanations until I see you. In the meantime, believe me, "Your affectionate brother,

"FRANCIS DANE."

I folded the letter in silence, and looked at Sidney, who stood motionless, gazing straight before her.

"So for the last three months you have been deceiving both your father and me!" I said in a tone I had never used to her before. "You have concealed from him that these people were here, and from me that he had forbidden the acquaintance. I am disappointed in you, Sidney."

"Most people are when they know me well," she replied, with a faltering attempt at a laugh; and, leaning her elbow on the chimney-piece, she let her forehead fall on her hand. Her back was towards me, but I could see her face in the glass, and there was a look of anxious trouble upon it that smote me with sudden pity.

"My child," I said impulsively, putting my arm about her waist, "why will you not confide in me? You have some secret trouble; let me share it; you would surely find it a relief. Will you not trust me, Sidney?"

She glanced into my face, then looked down. Her lips trembled.

"I do trust you, Aunt Catherine," she answered after a pause. "But—but I cannot tell you; it is impossible; you would not understand."

Before I could speak again she disengaged herself from my arm, and continued, in her usual tone: "I suppose I may write a note of excuse to Mrs. Lightwood? that does not come under the head of forbidden communications?"

"If you will allow me to read it before it goes."

"Oh, certainly." She seated herself at her desk, and took up the pen, but instead of beginning to write, she sat for full five minutes with her chin propped on her upturned palm, looking out before her with a face of intent and anxious thought.

"It is getting late, my dear," I reminded her at length: "you had better write at once." She started and pushed back her hair.

"Yes, I will do it at once," she said, and dipping the pen in the ink, hastily wrote a few lines, which she handed to me for inspection. I glanced over them and saw that she had excused herself on the plea of a head-ache.

"Have you an envelope?" she asked, as I gave her back the note, "I can't find one." I left the room to fetch my letter-case, which was in the dining-room. When I returned Sidney said hurriedly: "Oh, I am sorry to have troubled you, Aunt Catherine: I found one

after all. There is the note, and she handed it to me sealed and addressed.

"For once the stereotyped excuse is not a fib, for my head does really ache distractingly," she added, passing her hands over her forehead. "I think there is thunder in the air. I will go and lie down for a time: I shall not care for any dinner, so please don't let me be disturbed. If I am better towards seven o'clock I shall go and spend an hour at the 'Cottage.'"

"The Cottage," which was the residence of my cousin, Lady Hillyard, was the next house to mine, and the two gardens communicated by means of a door in an ivy-covered wall.

"Do so, my dear. Lady Hillyard is always glad to see you," I answered.

She paused a moment at the door, turning the knob in her hand: then coming suddenly back to my side she put her hands on my shoulders, and looked into my face with an unwonted softness in her handsome dark eyes.

"Dearest, kindest, best of aunties, forgive your graceless niece," she said, with a tremulous smile; "forgive me, not only for deceiving you, but for all my caprice and ingratitude. Tell me that"—her head drooped on my shoulder—"tell me that you love me a little in spite of it."

"My poor child, can you doubt it?" I exclaimed, much touched, stroking the braids of her glossy dark hair.

She lifted her face and kissed me once—twice, and I felt a tear on my cheek; the next moment she was gone, and I was left to my own meditations.

That they were not altogether pleasant ones may be imagined. The more I reflected on what had passed, and the oftener I read my brother's letter, the more anxious I grew.

He could have but one reason for objecting to her intercourse with the Lightwoods, and when I remembered that she had been in constant communication with them for the past three months, with almost daily opportunities of meeting "that scamp, Fred Forrester," I felt anything but comfortable.

I longed for my brother's arrival, and yet half dreaded it; fearing some outbreak of his fiery temper.

It was not wonderful that I had but little appetite for dinner that day.

My solitary meal was soon over, and I returned to the drawing-room, and tried to occupy myself as usual, but found that I was too restless to settle to anything.

The heat, instead of diminishing, seemed to increase as the evening advanced. There was a curious hush and stillness, like the stillness of dread, in the sultry air, broken only by the distant muttering of thunder, and the frightened twitter of a bird, hiding beneath the leaves from the coming storm.

Night "came down with a rush" (as in the tropics) an hour before its time; at seven o'clock it was dark; so dark that, looking out through the open window as I sat alone in the drawing-room, I could not even trace the outline of the shrubbery trees: all was a vague black void.

"Do, for goodness' sake, ma'am, shut the window," cried my old servant, Carter, when she came in with a cup of coffee; "the storm'll be upon us in another minute, and if I'm not mistaken, it'll be the worst we've had this many a year."

The words were hardly out of her mouth, when the outer darkness was suddenly rent by an awful, blinding flash of lightning which literally seemed to set the sky on fire, and, barely a moment after, the thunder crashed close above the roof, so close, that I involuntarily crouched and put my hands to my head.

Carter screamed, and clung to me. "Lor' a' mercy! it's like the day o' judgment!" she panted.

"Shut all the doors and windows," I said hastily. "I will go upstairs to Miss Dane."

"Better leave Miss Sidney to herself, ma'am, if you'll excuse me," Carter replied, in her blunt way. "I went upstairs a minute ago to see if she was frightened, and would like me to sit with her, and she answered very short that she had seen much worse storms than this would be, and didn't want my company."

"Was she lying down?"

"I don't know, ma'am; I spoke to her through the door."

The storm proved indeed the worst we had known for years. The sky was lit up almost incessantly by the red glare of the lightning, though none of the succeeding flashes were so awfully vivid as the first; the thunder pealed as if all heaven's artillery had opened fire on the earth, and the rain came down like a cataract, "sheer, and strong, and loud." In little more than half an hour, however, it had spent its force. The thunder died away in the distance, and the rain abated. I threw the window open again, and admitted a stream of cool, delicious air; then, turning up the lamp, which I had lowered during the storm, I took up my work, and sat down on the sofa.

I had set the door open, so that I could see across the hall, and half way up the stairs, and I kept glancing up from my work in the expectation of seeing Sidney descend, for it was now nearly eight o'clock.

Within and without, the house was profoundly still, and the measured "tick-tack" of the old-fashioned clock on the stairs sounded unnaturally loud in the silence.

I felt lonely and unaccountably depressed, and began to wish impatiently that Sidney would come down and keep me company.

"It is too late now for her to go to Lady Hillyard's," I reflected, as the clock struck eight.

Even as the thought crossed my mind, looking towards the stairs, I saw her descending. She had changed her dress for a darker one, and wore a long black cashmere mantle, the hood of which was drawn over her head. Her face, in its dark frame, looked startlingly white.

She came noiselessly downstairs and across the hall; opposite the drawing-room door she paused, and looked in at me, but did not speak.

"Surely you are not going to the cottage to-night, Sidney?" I exclaimed. She made no reply, but passed on out of sight.

Something in her looks and manner made me uneasy. Suddenly a thought struck me that caused me to start to my feet. "Suppose she was not going to Lady Hillyard's after all? Suppose——" I stayed for no more suppositions, but threw down my work and followed her. She had already quitted the house, leaving the front door partly open.

Going out into the verandah, I saw her walking rapidly down the side-path towards the door in the garden-wall. I called to her, but she kept on without heeding me. However, I felt reassured now that I knew she was really gone to the Cottage, and only wondered anxiously whether she had been so imprudent as to rush out of doors in her thin house-shoes.

The rain had now entirely ceased, and the night was as calm as if no storm had ever troubled it, though the heavy rain-clouds had not yet dispersed, and the moon was climbing her way wearily through their dark masses. The breeze blew fresh and cool, bringing with it the rich moist scent of damp earth and grass. It was all so pleasant that I was tempted to linger a little out of doors. I threw a shawl over my head, and began to pace up and down the verandah.

About half an hour had passed thus, and I was just about to turn indoors when I heard wheels approaching along the road. They stopped at my gate, and presently a hired fly appeared in the drive, and drew up at the door; a tall figure, muffled in travelling wraps, alighted, and the next moment I was in my brother's arms, pouring out ejaculations of surprise and broken words of welcome. After a hasty embrace he released me, paid and dismissed the cabman, then followed me into the drawing-room.

"Where is Sidney?" was his first question, as he glanced round the room.

"She is spending the evening with Lady Hillyard; we did not expect you till to-morrow. I will send and fetch her."

"Wait a moment," he interposed, laying his hand on mine as I was about to ring the bell. "I want to have a little talk with you first. Sit down, Catherine."

He tossed his wraps on to the sofa, and sank into a chair, running his fingers through his hair. "Handsome Dane," as he had been

called, was handsome still, I thought, as I looked at him; but his face was worn and pale, and there was a look of haggard anxiety in his dark eyes.

"Francis, why did you come to-night, you were not fit to travel!" I said, involuntarily. He gave a short sigh.

"That is true enough, but I was in such a fever of anxiety that I could not wait until to-morrow. After what I had heard I felt that Sidney would not be safe till I was at her side. About those Lightwoods," he went on abruptly; "how long have they been in Leamington?"

"They took a house here about three months ago," I replied.

"Three months! And he—that"—he seemed to have a difficulty in pronouncing the name—"that Forrester is with them? And Sidney has been visiting them? Good heavens!" He started up and began to pace about the room.

"How much do you know? what has she told you?" he asked, suddenly.

"She has told me nothing. I only know from your letter that you object to the acquaintance—I conclude because you disapprove of Captain Forrester's attentions."

"Judge whether I have reason to disapprove of them," he returned, coming to a stop opposite me. "The scoundrel is a married man."

For a moment I was too startled to speak.

"Does Sidney know?" I asked. He shook his head.

"He has kept it so secret that his own sister does not know, I believe. I only learnt it myself by chance a month ago. He has been married six years."

"When did Sidney first meet him?"

"About a year back, at his sister's house, in Madras. He was in a regiment of Native Foot, and was over head and ears in debt, thanks to high play and fast living. Everyone knew that he was on the look-out for 'a pretty fool with money,' to retrieve his fortunes—and the fool he selected was my daughter. He must have bewitched the girl, I think, for she has sense enough in other matters. Before I even suspected what was going on, he had induced her to engage herself to him, and had almost succeeded in persuading her into a clandestine marriage, knowing well that I should never give my consent."

"But he was married already!"

"Just so; but as I have told you, very few persons knew of that former marriage, and I presume he intended to purchase the silence of those who did with Sidney's money. He was aware that her mother's fortune was under her own control. Well, on discovering what was going on, I was indignant, as you may think, and I resolved to send Sidney at once to you. I breathed more freely when I knew that the width of the Atlantic lay between her and Forrester. My

security was of short duration, however, for a couple of months afterwards I learned that he had sold out, and gone, with his sister, to England. At first I thought of writing to warn you against him, but on reflection, I resolved to come instead. I got my leave at once, and sailed by the next ship—the *Cheetah*. On board, acting as valet to General Fenwick, was Forrester's old servant, a Frenchman named Delplanque, who had been his 'âme damnée,' for years, and was in all his secrets. Forrester had borrowed money from him, it seemed, not a large sum, but all the poor fellow's savings, and had given him the slip, and gone off with it to England. Out of revenge, Delplanque came to me and told me something that startled me—namely, that his late master was a married man. He had deserted his wife—a Frenchwoman—long before, and she was living with her own people. Delplanque had himself witnessed the marriage, but had agreed to hold his tongue 'for a consideration.' He added that 'M. le Capitaine' had boasted he should outwit me, and introduce my daughter to me on my return as Mrs. Forrester. Imagine if you can what I felt on hearing that, and how my anxiety was increased when I accidentally learned at Southampton that the Lightwoods were living in Leamington. Well, thank heaven I have arrived in time. And now, Kate, send for Sidney—or stay," he added, rising, "let us go and fetch her."

I threw on my shawl again, and we went out into the quiet night.

"Oh, the sweet English air!" exclaimed my brother, lifting his forehead to the breeze. "How it takes me back into the long past, when we were all together in the dear old home. I had looked forward to having one like it some day, Kate."

"And so you will have, I hope, Frank."

"Who knows? I have learnt the folly of making plans for the future."

We passed through the gate in the wall, and crossed the lawn and garden of the Cottage, where the flowers were pouring out their fragrance into the night.

The servant who answered our summons at the bell, and who was too well trained to betray any surprise at our untimely visit, ushered us at once into the room where Lady Hillyard was sitting, her favourite little sanctum on the ground floor, looking out on the garden.

A shaded lamp stood on the table, which cast a circle of soft but brilliant light on the books and papers, leaving in half obscurity the silvered hair and delicate high-bred features of the mistress of the house, who was writing. One glance round the room showed me that she was alone.

She looked up as we entered, rose, and after peering doubtfully for a moment at my companion, came forward to him with both hands outstretched.

"Francis, my dear cousin, welcome home!"

He took her hands, but his reply was uttered mechanically, and as his eyes wandered round the room I saw in them the same misgiving that had just struck chill to my own heart.

"Where is Sidney?" he asked, hoarsely. She withdrew her hands, and looked in surprise from his face to mine.

"I do not know," she answered; "she is not here; I have not seen her to-day."

"Lucy, Lucy," I cried, hardly knowing in my agitation what I said; "she *must* be here——she came here; I saw her go——"

"My dear," she answered gently, "Sidney is not here, she has not been here to-night. Compose yourself, and tell me what has happened."

"She said she should spend the evening with you. I saw her pass through the garden-door at about eight o'clock, and she has not returned."

"Is the gate of your drive locked?" demanded Francis, turning to my cousin.

"No, not yet."

"That explains it: she came into your garden by one entrance, and left it by the other," he said, in a tone so unnaturally calm that I looked at him in wonder.

His face was white to the lips, and there was an expression upon the features that made them seem unfamiliar to me.

"Lucy," he continued, "you have a carriage, I think? will you have it brought round at once, without a moment's delay?"

She glanced at him uneasily, but immediately assented, and left the room to give the order.

He stood, with folded arms, looking down. I touched his shoulder.

"Frank, if we find them, you—you will not be harsh with Sidney?—promise me," I pleaded. "Poor child! her fault brings its own punishment."

He looked at me gravely.

"I will not be harsh with Sidney, I promise you," he replied, "but I have a reckoning to settle elsewhere." He walked away from me to the hearth, and said not another word.

In ten minutes the carriage was ready. I sent a message to Carter that we should probably return late, and that she was to sit up for us herself; then my brother gave the coachman Mrs. Lightwood's address, and we were soon whirling rapidly towards the town.

A quarter of an hour afterwards we drew up at the Lightwoods' door.

The "little dance" had already commenced; the rooms were brilliantly lighted, and when we were admitted, the widow, in an elaborate demi-toilette of "feuille-morte" silk and amber lace, was just sweeping across the hall, followed by her eldest daughter,

Carrie. She was a tall, showy-looking woman of forty or thereabouts, with fine teeth, a made-up complexion, and a false smile.

Expecting to see another of her guests, she was coming forward to greet us with some stereotyped phrase of welcome, when, seeing who it was, she stopped short, her bland expression changing with ludicrous abruptness, to one of very genuine consternation. Recovering herself, however, she extended her hand to my brother, saying sweetly as she ushered us into a sitting-room: "Colonel Dane in England! what a delightful surprise, and how good of you to drop in upon us directly you arrived. You have brought Sidney, I hope. Where is she?"

"Where is she?" he repeated sternly; "that is the question I am come to ask you." She drew back a step, her false smile fading, and, like myself, my brother evidently read in her conscious face the confirmation of his worst fears.

"It is as I thought," he muttered: "they are gone," and his head drooped upon his breast.

"They? who do you mean?" she questioned, hardily.

"Oh, Mrs. Lightwood," I exclaimed, "you know well that Francis means my niece, Sidney, and your brother."

"What—they have eloped? is it possible?" she said coolly; "but pray, Miss Dane, why should you take it for granted that I knew it? I assure you it is news to me. I am not in my brother's secrets."

"Not in all of them, I believe," interposed Francis; "you did not know, for instance, that he had been a married man for the last six years."

The change in her face was something to remember.

"Married!" she gasped. "Fred *married!* Nonsense, I don't believe it."

He took from his pocket-book, and handed to her, a folded paper, the copy of the marriage certificate. She glanced over it, then sank into a chair, her cheeks blanched to the colour of the paper.

"Colonel Dane," she faltered, in a changed voice, "I solemnly swear that I was ignorant of this. Fred took care not to let me know it. And to think that I have helped and encouraged him to—— good heavens!"

The blood rushed over her face, dyeing it crimson to the temples, and she broke off abruptly, biting her lip.

"Undo, if you can, the mischief your help and encouragement has brought about, and tell me where I shall find my daughter," he returned.

"I will tell you all I know. In the note I received from Sidney this afternoon there was an enclosure for Fred—just a few hurried lines, telling him that you, Colonel Dane, were in England, and would be at Leamington to-morrow, and that she had made up her mind, at last, to consent to a runaway marriage. He was to take the next train to Birmingham, and wait for her at the station there; she would

follow by the one that leaves here at half-past eight, and they could go on to London by the express."

Francis glanced at his watch—a quarter to nine.

"Too late!" he muttered, with a sound like a groan; "they are on their way to London by this time, and once there—but I will follow them; if there is no train I will have a 'special.'"

And without bestowing another word or glance on Mrs. Lightwood, he left the house. When we reached the station, we found it silent and deserted. A porter who was lounging against the door of the booking-office informed us, in answer to our inquiries respecting the Birmingham trains, that the last "regular" had gone at 8.30, but that a "'scursion" would pass through in half an hour and we could go on by that if we chose. It seemed to our impatience much more than half an hour before the lamps of the excursion train gleamed in the distance. Every compartment was crammed with noisy "Black country" folks, and it was with some difficulty that we found seats in a second-class carriage—first-class there was none.

"It is odd," my companion whispered, bending towards me across the carriage; "when I took the tickets just now I made some inquiries of the clerk, and he declared most positively that no young lady answering to Sidney's description booked to Birmingham by the last train. Is it possible that Mrs. Lightwood has deceived us?"

I did not know what to think; it was all dark to me; dark as the wide vague scene through which we were rushing.

As I sat, looking out into the gloom, Sidney's face as I had seen it last, pale and grave and calm, rose before me with strange vividness, and would not be dismissed.

We did not exchange another word till, on emerging from a long tunnel, we found ourselves suddenly in the light and noise and bustle of the Birmingham station.

"Stay here while I make inquiries," Francis said, as the train slackened speed, and glided down the platform. "If they have—What do you say?" he broke off, as I caught his arm with a sudden exclamation.

"Francis, look! there is Captain Forrester!"

He stood alone, on the edge of the platform; his valise in his hand, his travelling rug over his arm, looking eagerly into every carriage as it passed. My brother did not wait for the train to stop before he leaped out, and as the other came hurrying up, still searching the carriages with a look of disappointment and perplexity, they met each other face to face. I saw Forrester start and recoil, but I saw no more then, for the train bore me on past them several yards.

When I alighted it was some moments before I could find them in the crowd. At length I saw them standing under a lamp, the light of which fell full upon their faces—my brother's white and stern, Forrester's excited and perplexed.

"But I assure you, Colonel Dane, that I have told you the truth,"

the latter was saying as I approached. "Your daughter is not with me, nor do I know where she is. She appointed to come by the 8.30 train; as she did not I concluded she had been prevented, and I waited, hoping she would arrive by this one."

"You had a note from her this evening; show it me," said Francis abruptly, after a pause.

"It will confirm what I have told you," the other returned, as he produced and handed to him a half sheet of paper covered with hastily scrawled lines, which I read over my brother's shoulder.

"Papa is in England, and will be at Leamington to-morrow. He is more than ever determined to part us, it seems. I have made up my mind at last to consent to what you proposed—a clandestine marriage. Take the next train to Birmingham; I will follow by the one that leaves here at 8.30. We can go on to London, or where you will; I trust the rest to you. I gave you my heart long ago; now I place my honour in your hands. Yours ever,

"SIDNEY."

"God knows I would not have betrayed her," said Forrester, who had watched our faces as we read. "Before noon to-morrow she would have been my wife, and ——"

"Who would have been the witness to *this* marriage?" questioned my brother, looking him full in the face. "Delplanque's successor?"

He started, and reddened to the roots of his hair, more, as it seemed, with the sudden surprise than any other emotion.

"Delplanque is an infernal traitor," he muttered, looking down.

"Like master like man," was the bitter retort.

"But if Sidney is not with you, where can she be?" I exclaimed anxiously; "she is not at home."

A vague dread of I knew not what was beginning to creep over me.

"Francis, let us go back at once; ask when the next train leaves," I urged.

"Allow me to ascertain for you," said Forrester. He hurried away, and returned in a few moments with the information that the next train was the midnight express. After a slight hesitation, he turned to Francis and added: "I shall hold myself at your disposition, Colonel Dane, for the next week, should you require satisfaction. That is my London address." He handed my brother a card, which the latter tore in two, and threw away without glancing at it.

"Gentlemen do not fight now, and if they did, no *gentleman* would fight *you*," he replied, with an emphasis which brought the blood to Forrester's cheeks. "If you had succeeded in your villainous scheme, I would have given you a villain's chastisement; as it is, I only require you to keep out of my path for the future. Come, Kate," and, drawing my hand through his arm, he moved away.

The tender, luminous rose-colour of dawn was creeping over the eastern sky when we reached home once more.

In the pale, mysterious twilight, the house, with its closed shutters and drawn blinds, had a ghostly look—a look that made me shudder, reminding me of death. The door was opened by Carter.

"Where is Miss Sidney? has she returned?" was my hurried question.

"Miss Sidney, ma'am? I thought she was with you; no, she has not returned."

My brother and I looked at each other blankly.

"Perhaps she has left a letter," I suggested; "let us go upstairs and look." I led the way to her bedroom. At the door I paused, and obeying an instinct I have never been able to account for, motioned to him to wait, and let me go in first. I entered, but had hardly crossed the threshold when I drew back, with an inarticulate cry. The window was wide open, admitting the chill air and cold grey light of dawn; a small writing-table stood near it, on which still burnt a shaded lamp, and there, with her back to me, sat—Sidney. She was dressed as I had seen her the night before; her hat and a small travelling-valise lay on a chair near her. Her letter-case was open before her, and she appeared to have fallen asleep in the act of writing, for her cheek rested on a half-finished letter, and the pen was still in her fingers. All this I saw at a glance as I stood on the threshold; a dreadful fear clutched at my heart, and seemed to turn me to stone.

"Sidney!"

There was no answer. I hurried to her side. The hand I touched was marble cold; on the fair face I turned to the light was the deep mysterious calm which is never seen on the features of the living. She was dead. Hours before, God's messenger had come for her, in fire from heaven, and without a moment's pain, a moment's warning, she had been snatched out of life into eternity; snatched from the brink of ruin, from dishonour worse than death, from long heart-break and bitter shame and misery. Even to us who loved her, it was not difficult to say "Heaven's will be done."

The unfinished letter was to her father, a few tear-stained lines, entreating his forgiveness for the step she was about to take. We ascertained to a moment the time of her death, for the works of her watch had been stopped by the fatal flash, and the hands pointed to half-past seven. And now occurs the question which has haunted me ever since. If Sidney died at half-past seven, who, or rather, *what* was the figure bearing her likeness which I beheld at eight o clock? I leave the answer to my reader.

MARY E. PENN.

THE ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood, Author of "Through Holland."

THE climate of Shetland is of very even temperature. Snow and frost are not often seen there, and never continue. For this reason the Shetlanders are not skaters. The apparently strange fact of an even temperature in so northern a latitude is due to the influence of the Gulf Stream. For this reason, consumption and that class of disease is not common in the islands. Many persons, indeed, suffering from weak chests and throats, from bronchitis, etc., may go up here and find the health and strength that is denied them in England or Scotland. The most prevalent complaint is rheumatism. There is perhaps not much more rain in Shetland than in many other places, but the amount of evaporation renders the climate damp and moist; so that few of the inhabitants it is said, reach the age of eighteen or twenty but their enemy, rheumatism, finds them out.

Another malady is dyspepsia, or indigestion, which the natives not inaptly term "rheumatism of the stomach." This is very general, and is in a great measure due to the immense quantity of tea they drink, and their mode of making it. They take it often five or six times a day. The tea is put into a saucepan or kettle, and placed on the fire: there it remains until the decoction is bitter with strength, and it is then considered fit for use. This in time does its work.

Nevertheless, the Shetlanders are a long-lived race: and with the above exceptions know few of the ills to which flesh is heir. This is due to various causes. The even temperature of the islands: a frugal mode of living, possessing the bare necessaries, but none of the luxuries of life: a pure, bracing climate: and, above all, occupations that keep them always in the open air.

It certainly cannot be due to the internal arrangements of their homes. As a rule each family lives in one room: a room small and often dirty; the latter for two reasons: the natural taste or tendency of the lady of the family, her husband and promising flock, and the use of peat fuel. The smoke too often escapes by every outlet other than the one expressly made for it: proving that obstinacy is not confined to the animal kingdom alone. Everything it touches, peat smoke blackens; it is a law that you cannot touch pitch and not be defiled: and however delicious the aroma—and it is nothing less—may seem to a stranger as he passes the window of a hut or cabin in the open country, he would probably find his love for the scent wax cold after spending an hour or two in one of the close, crowded, peat-smoked chambers of some of the houses that adorn Lerwick.

The smiling countenances of the good folk cannot escape the universal tinge, and tone, which clings to the air with all the prevalence though not the danger of an infection. They will rush out into the air a dark bronze, or copper colour, from the health-giving powers of sun and exposure, their faces picturesquely varied with dusky streaks, like the surface of heated tar, from familiar contact with the peat-dried atmosphere. They live often as many as ten and twelve and even more in one of these small rooms: live, flourish, and thrive: and they will to this number occasionally add two or three lodgers who may chance to be not unreasonably fastidious in the way of accommodation. It has been vulgarly said the more the merrier: and, it may be added—the warmer.

In the great metropolis of London, this overcrowding of the haunts of the poor is given as a reason for so much misery, so much helplessness in doing good, so much moral and mental degradation. And this is just and true. Many, nay, most of the evils existing, would disappear for ever, if our courts and alleys, teeming with sights that would be a reproach to any nation, and are a sin to us, could give place to a new order of things where health and morality might have a chance for life. The thing has been said over and over again: but it must continue to be said, until at length, for the same reason that continual dropping will wear away a stone, we behold a resurrection of moral and physical life from the dead.

But there are no such terrible evils to correct in Shetland: there would possibly not be in London, if London possessed the advantages of Shetland. There, if their rooms are crowded, they do not suffer in consequence. Such a thing as immorality is almost unknown. They are strong, healthy, and hardy. The children run about the streets, as a rule, with bare heads, and naked legs and feet; their clothing of the scantiest. They seem to delight in their bare legs, and on the coldest and wettest days go splashing about the pools and puddles as happy as ducks disporting in a pond. One day in the seven they come out in all their grandeur: little woollen stockings and clumsy shoes. But the day of rest becomes to them in consequence a day of toil. It is evident the little urchins are not comfortable. The shoes are for ever coming off: and the stockings are for ever down at heel; and many a howl goes up for the freedom of the six days as the unfamiliar shoe has treated its miserable little owner to a bath in the gutter, which would be rather pleasant than otherwise but that it is involuntary.

In the open country the natives have their own little huts or cottages: small, long, shallow cabins of dry walls, possessing just "a but and a ben." The but consists of the living-room of the happy family, and only a look into it would be sufficient for many people with fine feelings. The pigs are allowed to come into the but, and the hens and the dogs, and the sheep, and any other animals that may be transformed into domestic pets and blessings. The peat

smoke colours the interior to the most melancholy of hues. It is

capricious in its humours, and rather prefers the door to its natural mode of exit, the holes in the roof. Many of the huts have no

chimney, and the fire is made on the hard clay floor in the middle of the but.

The ben is kept in a more select manner. It is the sleeping-room of the father and mother, and is partitioned off. It is also the state apartment, in which company is received and entertained, and it has pretentions to a chair and a table. The rest of the family shake themselves down at night in the but, each choosing the position that seems most suggestive of comfort to his peculiar idiosyncrasy: none the less happy, perhaps, for a general suspicion of dirt and draught. The buts are of this one storey only, heavily thatched. Sometimes, when sunk a little below the road, they look all roof, like a man whose body unduly preponderates over his legs. You must be careful to stoop in entering the doorway, or you might possibly leave your head outside on the thatch: a decidedly misplaced object of beauty and adornment.

The inhabitants of these little cabins are not poor. They live frugally and have more than enough for their wants. At certain seasons the men go out to the *haaf*, or deep sea fishing. The Shetlanders are nearly all fishermen: little other occupation is open to them. If they dislike that, they must emigrate, and go out into the world. Many do so; and, to the credit of the race, have risen to positions of wealth and responsibility, some to fame. The natives consider themselves Norwegians: anything rather than Scotchmen.

The deep sea fishing commences in May and ends in August. Besides this they take voyages: cod-fishing in the Faroe Islands and Iceland: and the Greenland boats come down to Shetland for their crews, and then go whaling and sealing in the Greenland seas and Davis Straits. The sealing expedition is a cruel traffic that ought to be sternly put an end to. They leave Lerwick in March and reach the sealing grounds in about ten days. The men land on the ice and stun the young seals, who do not attempt to move, but look up into their faces with a pitiful, helpless expression, as though asking them to have mercy. But there is no mercy. Before they are dead their skins are taken off, and the men return home in due time well paid for their labour.

Most of these men, thus occupied at sea, when at home live in their little buts and bens, and pass their time in making and mending nets, and in other useful work. Besides their fishing, on the commons or scatholds everywhere around the men have certain tracts or portions given to them, on which they have the privilege of keeping such cattle as they may be lucky enough to possess: cows, ponies, sheep, or other animals. Thus, very comfortably, they manage to make both ends meet.

Whilst the men mend their nets, the women knit garments of Shetland wool. The sheep are much cultivated, and the excellence of the Shetland wool is proverbial. How much it owes to the skill of the women is perhaps not a mystery. The young girls, especially,

give their spare time to the work, and marvellous are some of their productions: rivalling in beauty, but happily not in price, the manufactures of Belgium and India. The shopkeepers pay many of the girls in kind, who thus frequently make up for the bare-legged period of their lives by coming out in all the colours of the rainbow. It is not the only time they make "figures" of themselves. On the 4th of January—old Christmas morning—they dress and disguise, these youths and maidens, and parade about the streets. At one o'clock the next morning the young men turn out, and drag tar barrels through the town, with noise and riot, and a blowing of horns. I saw the same tar barrel ceremony performed on a smaller scale, and at less ghostly hours, on the 24th of June, in the Scilly Islands. The effect of these lighted tar barrels, in the dark night, going through the streets of Lerwick may perhaps be imagined. I would rather imagine than realise it.

It has been remarked that the Shetlanders are a long-lived race. The greater number live to be eighty. They generally die of no other complaint than old age. Amongst the men, especially, a youthful appearance is often kept to the last. A man of fifty will frequently be taken by a stranger for fifteen or twenty years less, and at eighty will think himself juvenile and brisk enough to go out to the Greenland seas. People, it is said, retain the same youthful appearance in the climate of Australia, where men do not lose their teeth, become bald or grey headed—a paradise of patriarchs. If this be true, would it not be almost worth while emigrating, at the age of fifty or sixty, and so secure a second youth, for which so many have sighed and sought in vain? A species of été de St. Michel in the winter of life.

There are many important islands in the Orkney group, but the mainland of Shetland possesses the greater part of the attention attaching to its own archipelago. It is of considerable extent, being fifty-five miles from north to south: long and narrow. Interests are consequently somewhat more divided; and though everybody more or less knows everybody else, there is a good deal of breathing-room, of freedom and expanse in their mutual relations. Amongst the business people you find a fund of energy and industry, coupled to an amount of independence and radicalism of spirit, which makes them somewhat unpleasantly abrupt. From the small demands upon their purses for luxury and display, many become possessed of considerable fortunes. It is a modern instance that fortunes are saved, not made. In Shetland the result is perhaps a combination of both chances. The builders of the fortunes make no change in their mode of life: a neglect of duty for which their heirs probably make full atonement. Many of them have a strict eye to economy, as witness the following incident.

Some little time ago a worthy woman was taken seriously ill. She lived in a little cottage down on the shore, where the sea for ever surged and swayed in front of her window. The eternal

lesson chanted by the ocean ought to have given her a certain grandeur of mind. Perhaps it did. Her good man was a fisherman, to which craft he joined the less noble occupation of a cobbler. This worthy couple lived fifteen miles from a doctor; and when the good wife was taken ill, they hoped she would recover without the expensive luxury of a leech who lived at so great a distance. Gradually, however, she got worse, and at length the husband in doubtful tones suggested that it might become necessary to go to Lerwick for the doctor. The good wife sternly objected. It would cost a mint of money; four pounds; far too much to be spending on physic. They would wait and see. They waited and saw, until one fine morning the good woman breathed her last. And then they had to do for the dead woman what they would not do for the living—summon the doctor and pay him the four pounds, to certify of what she had died.

This is no mere story, but a fact: proving that the Shetlanders are frugally inclined, and look twice at their money before parting with it. But this wise and frugal turn of mind is not altogether confined to the poor of Shetland, as the accompanying anecdote, a fact equally true and authentic, will serve to testify.

A man in humble life, but well to do, and very respectable, whom we will call Mackenzie, owed a sum of money to a rich "laird," one of the wealthiest men in the whole of Shetland. When the day arrived for paying the debt, Mackenzie called upon the laird, found him at home, and was ushered upstairs into his sanctum. The laird expressed much satisfaction at seeing his tenant—his errand was a pleasant one. He had walked far and must be weary. The laird regretted he had no whisky and water to offer him. Whisky, just now, was dear—and water in an island, is probably often scarce. Yes, there was the bill. Twenty pounds ten shillings, and one farthing. All quite correct. Neither addition nor deduction at fault. Mackenzie put down twenty pounds and ten shillings.

"And one farthing," said the wealthy laird emphatically, looking up at Mackenzie.

The latter had not a farthing in his possession, and inwardly smiling put down a halfpenny. The laird looked at the halfpenny, fumbled in all his pockets, searched his secretaire, dived into his money bag—but no farthing was forthcoming. It was very annoying. Mackenzie naturally did not care about the change, yet, determined to see how far the rich laird would go, he held his peace. The laird rang the bell, and a servant appeared.

"Thomas, go round with my compliments to Mr. Brown, and ask him to oblige me with the change of two farthings for a halfpenny."

Thomas took the outstretched halfpenny, departed, and in about five minutes returned with the obligation—the requisite two farthings. During this time Mackenzie had been kept standing. The laird gravely took the coins.

"Here, Mr. Mackenzie, is your change, and here's your receipt," said he, handing over one of the farthings, and carefully depositing the other in a wash-leather bag.

Mackenzie returned his thanks, pocketed the coin, wished the laird a good-day, and departed, his ideas of human nature scarcely exalted by the interview.

If all the Shetlanders were of this economical turn of mind, it would not be a wonder that some of them grow rich. Happily, however, they are not so for the most part. They are much given to kindness and hospitality. One of the chief gentlemen in the islands told me that some years ago, if he caught sight of strangers anywhere near his house, he invariably went out and brought them in, entertained them, and sent them on their way rejoicing. Things are different now: visitors and tourists are matters of every day occurrence, and to entertain all passers-by would be a serious interruption to the quiet of home. There are also inns and public places of rest about the island: unknown institutions at the time alluded to.

I saw very few of the Shetland ponies in Shetland. The Shetlanders call all their ponies horses, and would be much wounded in their dignity if anyone gave them the more diminutive title. In Orkney, on the other hand, all the horses are called ponies. The ponies in many parts of Shetland run wild upon great tracts of the commons or scatholds. One might almost fancy them without owners, and get up a miniature hunt as in the prairies of America. They are stunted probably for the same reason that vegetation is stunted: but they grow wonderfully strong, and do good work for their owners. As with most things, the price of these ponies has increased, whilst the breed is deteriorating.

With the very best of these ponies it is a formidable thing to pay a morning call in Shetland. Amongst the inhabitants a call is generally supposed to last about a week. One morning I started upon a drive of fifteen miles to visit some friends. The roughness and inequality of the road, now up hill and now down, made the fifteen miles almost as long and arduous as thirty. Here, as in Orkney, all vehicles are "machines." This particular machine was a species of dog-cart, wisely patronized in the country on account of its lightness. My jehu, an intelligent youth, was of somewhat tender years to have the care of one's life committed to his charge.

Not having as yet been into the interior in that direction it was new ground to explore. It proved a long, monotonous, yet enjoyable drive. During the whole of that fifteen miles we met scarcely a human being. Occasionally a few scattered cottages and cabins came into view, which Jamie, the youthful driver, distinguished and dignified by names possessing more letters than the hamlets counted houses: and he would point out here a school and there a church that looked smaller than its adjoining manse, yet larger than the needs of any possible congregation. "Where do they come from?" I

asked, feeling a natural and proper sympathy for a minister who all the days of his life had the depressing work of ministering to bare walls. "Where do the people come from, Jamie, Sunday after Sunday?"

"Oh, sir, just round and about," replied the intelligent Jamie, describing an area with the sweep of his arm that took in the sky and the horizon. "Over the hills and far away yonder. You'd be surprised to see the great number of them coming to church of a sabbath."

I felt that I should be very much surprised. It was really like taking a drive in an unknown country. Hills round and about us gloomy and melancholy, yet grand in their way, and possessing that peculiar charm of solitude and solitariness that appeals to the fancy and elevates the mind. With every turn of the road the hills changed form and undulation, but were never otherwise than sombre and lonely, wild and barren, with few traces of vegetation. Here and there a flock of sheep were browsing, but more frequently our progress was arrested by large flocks of geese, straggling over the road, or cropping the grass, or looking like snow-white patches on the distant heather. Like the ponies in other parts, the geese seemed to run wild and possess the land, unowned by mortal. Yet the different flocks, as Jamie declared with heroic admiration, never mix together, and unpleasant juxtaposition sometimes ends in a pitched battle: feathers fly, and there is much cackling, until the victorious side goes off in triumph to shake the remnant of its ruffled plumage into order.

Now and again, at unexpected turns of the road, sometimes in long vistas and sometimes near at hand, we caught glimpses of the sea, shimmering in the sunshine, and rising with the breeze that was rising also. And at intervals I noticed small boxes without lock or other security than a little loose wooden door, fastened to the dry stone walls that in Shetland do duty for hedges. "What can these be for, Jamie?" I asked, after puzzling in vain for a raison d'être.

"Oh, just wayside post offices, sir," replied Jamie. "The people write their letters, put them in these boxes, and the postman goes by once or twice a week and takes them away."

"Do you mean that letters are left there night and day, with no lock to secure them?"

"Oh ay!" returned Jamie. "What should ail them?"

"Are they never lost or stolen?"

"Stolen?" cried Jamie, in wrath bigger than his body. "Stolen, sir! There never was known such a thing as a thief in Shetland—never since the islands were created."

I envied Jamie's faith—or the privilege of living amongst so honest a people. Yet I believe he was right in the main, and that Shetlander and honesty are terms synonymous. In Lerwick, for instance, there is one policeman. He walks about with a military looking

stick, a sort of wand of office, which he flourishes with as much dignity as a mace bearer in my Lord Mayor's procession, or a parish beadle assisting at a beating of the boundaries—a gold lace round his cap, and a formidable looking coat with tails and brass buttons. He calls himself a superintendent or inspector, and his business is to superintend and inspect himself, and patrol Lerwick to the terror of the little bare-legged boys and girls: but it is not in the memory of the oldest inhabitant that he ever had other and less pleasant duty to perform. And we know that in Shetland they live to a great age. A man at a hundred is quite a juvenile and one man put out to sea at 140. I do not know whether he ever returned; probably not; but may still be seen sailing about the ocean, the phantom captain of a phantom ship.

And whilst we are on the subject of officials, I may as well further interrupt the thread of my drive, to state that the only other official of any importance I ever heard of in Lerwick is the town crier. I never had the privilege of seeing this gentleman, but I have no doubt the same practice is in vogue here that prevails in Orkney. There for the moderate sum of sixpence, the crier goes through the town with a brass bell, and delivers his message with such breathless rapidity, that only by following him about and taking up the tale at the point it was last lost, can you in any way gather whether he wishes to announce that a particular house is in flames, or that Mrs. Macbride has been safely delivered of the long expected twins.

But if anyone will go to the extravagance of a shilling, then the crier comes out with a big drum, the largest drum I ever saw, which made the greatest uproar I ever heard, equal to the drums of a hundred circuses rolled into one. With this he halts at every turn and fires away at the drum as if he had a special spite against the instrument—as very probably he has: and all the people rush out in wild excitement, hair erect, and mouths open to hear the important news. The drum also presses so heavily upon the crier that his speed of utterance is brought down to something like moderation, and you may gain the information without joining the mob that never fails to attend a big drum in its progress.

After a drive of fully three hours we reached our destination: a wild but picturesque spot: the sea was again round and about us, and near upon us. Across the water was the little island of Mousa, a green spot now uninhabited and used only as grazing land: conspicuous as containing the ruin of the burgh or castle. In front of us rose the large white house of Sand Lodge, by far the most attractive building I had yet seen in Shetland. It seemed almost like a return to civilization, and soon it proved to be so in reality: a greeting with old fashioned warmth and hospitality combined with refinement: a day that rendered my visit one of the pleasantest recollections of Shetland. Beyond the house—a strange sight in Shetland—were furnaces and pit-

shafts, and tall chimneys sending forth black smoke: all the signs and tokens of ironworks. No very disagreeable token as yet: the works have only recently been taken up by a company: but if eventually successful, this portion of the mainland will possess all the vestiges of a black country in miniature.

Unfortunately it was impossible to cross the water and inspect the burgh of Mousa. The wind had risen considerably, the water was rough and turbulent. But a long walk over the very edge of the cliffs, showed up the bold rock scenery, around which the sea for ever dashes itself in vainless fury: whilst the fresh strong breeze blew over the land and swayed here and there a rough field of bere; one of the few visible signs of cultivation. Stretching out to sea was Sumburgh Head, high and bold, and terminating the rocky coast.

I had heard much of the moonlight nights in Shetland, and rather rejoiced in the idea that a nearly full moon would light us on our road homewards. We started about eight o'clock. It was now blowing half a gale. The sun had neared the horizon in full splendour, casting magnificent tints about the sky that almost assumed the character of an aurora borealis. The moon was large and nearly round: as twilight gathered, her pale light increased to intense brilliancy: partially hid now and again behind these thin streaks of crimson, that appeared only to change the tints of her brightness and not conceal them.

Darkness at length fell upon us, and the pony, though homeward bound, was less brisk than he had been in the morning. The moon threw great shadows over the hills, as now and then a dark cloud flying along eclipsed her light. The hills themselves were steeped in gloom, and looked twice as large as they had looked in the daylight, weird and ghostly. Nor was our progress always smooth sailing. Every now and then a squall would come up; a heavy black cloud that enveloped the heavens with a pall and plunged us into intense darkness. The wind rushed up the valleys between the hills, and over the tops, and almost sent us backwards; the rain came down with the force of hail. This would last for about five minutes. The cloud would then sweep away, and the moon once more bathe the landscape in such silvery light as proved beyond doubt the claims of Shetland to the glory of her moonlight nights.

As we progressed, Jamie the youthful began to have fears for his safety, or had a wish to arouse mine. Here was a precipice. It was an awful place. It was too dark to see, but the pony could easily fall over unless he kept a tight hand upon him. Then there was a great hole in the road; he didn't know exactly where, but we should have to look very carefully for the hole, or it would be all up with the pony.

"But there was no hole in coming," I remonstrated. "How could there be a hole now, and you know anything about it?"

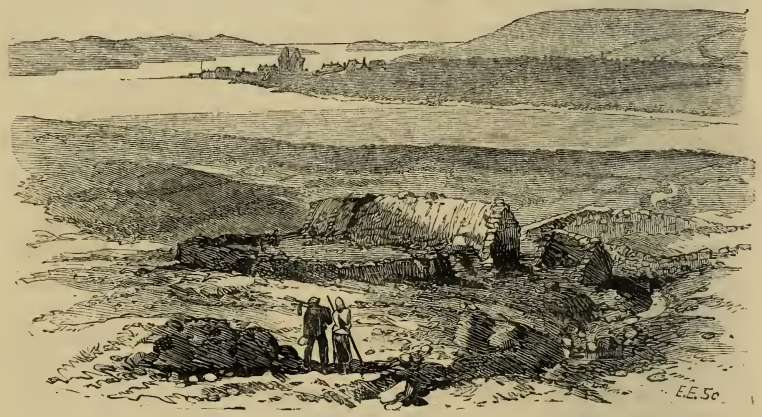
"Oh, sir, you're just mistaken. The hole was there, but you

were cloud-gazing when we passed it, or it might be hill-gazing, and so didn't see it; but it's there, and it's an awful hole. 'Tis a shame the road-menders don't do their work better."

Thus, according to Jamie, if there were not robbers in Shetland, there were at least people who occasionally failed in their duty. It was some consolation to an erring mortal that he was not living amongst a perfectly immaculate race.

The stars were so bright that I endeavoured to interest Jamie in the first elements of astronomy. For a few moments his attention was puzzled and profound. Then he came back to earth abruptly. "Oh ay! it was all very well to be stargazing; but the hole, sir—the hole in the road. Whilst we were stargazing upwards, the hole might be letting us downwards, and then where should we be?"

It was impossible to resist this argument. By-and-by a small hole



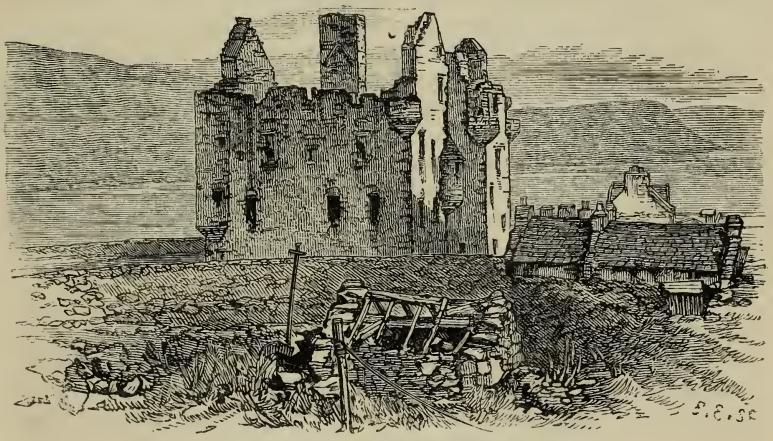
Scalloway, Shetland.

was really discovered; and Jamie testified his relief by straightway falling asleep, where possibly his mind went back to the stars. So we went on, until I began to think we had had enough of our drive, when, close upon midnight, we clattered into Lerwick, down the long, straggling street. Every door was closed, every window dark, every inhabitant, no doubt, long in his first slumber. I pitied Jamie. He was of too tender years to be out driving at midnight; and I recommended him to his father's compassion the next time I met that smiling but hard-hearted parent.

The house, as we stopped at the outer entrance, was shrouded in the universal darkness and silence. In front, the water looked cold and gloomy, and the various small boats at anchor upon its restless surface were tossing and plashing up and down. The outline of the opposite shore of Bressay could faintly be discerned, reposing amidst the silence and stillness of death. My landlady, making sure I should not return that night, had fastened the door and gone to

bed. She hastily answered the summons; bolts were slowly withdrawn, and a timid voice asked if I would be good enough to wait before entering. I suppose I was too impatient, for I obtained a vision of a long white ghost disappearing behind a door with more haste than a dignified ghost ought to have used so far off cockcrow. Then Jamie drove off, and re-awoke the echoes of the little town, and no doubt was soon slumbering in his small bed, dreaming of stars, and holes and precipices that required a tight hand over the pony.

On a subsequent occasion we drove over to Scalloway, a distance of six miles, and a slight record is necessary on account of the importance of the place. A part of the road lay through the peat district—the black country of Shetland, as the natives call it, though happily the blackness does not extend itself to the atmosphere. The road was diversified, if not enlivened, by the peat-women old and young



Scalloway Castle, Shetland.

returning homewards, their kishies upon their backs piled with fuel. The aspect of the country was much as that already described, except that it was perhaps a little more grand and open, showing up in greater extent. The peat-fields were black and sombre, and the men and women were leaving off work—earlier than usual, perhaps, because it was Saturday afternoon: though I know not whether the half-holiday movement has yet obtained influence in Shetland.

Scalloway was originally the capital of Shetland, if it does not still consider itself so: but all trade and importance has left it for the more happily situated Lerwick. Yet the situation of Scalloway is perhaps the most beautiful in all Shetland. The long sound, stretching far away down to the sea; the holms and skerries scattered about the water, the broken undulations of the coast, with its innumerable little bays or voes; the bold and beautiful headland, in the distance, of the Fitful Head, which gives its name to Norna, and looks even from here majestic enough to be worthy of the honour. It was not

far from Scalloway that the old Udaller, Magnus Troil, was supposed to live, with his fair daughters Minna and Brenda, who divide between them the heart and admiration of the readers of "The Pirate."

The village lies partly on rising ground, and possesses more beach than I had yet seen in Shetland. Small, white sand, up which the water, of the utmost transparency, quietly and lazily rippled in the sunshine. Innumerable gulls perched upon the water, and whirled around with wild clang at sight of an unfriendly gun. Upon the beach, women were hard at work, taking piles of cod out of tubs, which they scrubbed upon boards with hard brushes, with a might worthy of Spartan women. Both to smell and sight it was not a very pleasant occupation: but the cod in due season would be thought excellent food by those to whose lot it might fall.

Hard by, prominently and picturesquely situated on a tongue of land, was the ruin of Scalloway Castle, built by Earl Patrick Stewart the cruel, who always went forth in pomp and ceremony, and proclaimed his courses at dinner by means of trumpeters. Scenes sad and cruel has Scalloway Castle witnessed: many a victim drawn up to the roof and left to swing in the air until death released him. The walls of the ruin remain, and prove how strong the castle must have been, though less beautiful than the palace at Kirkwall, and of a different character. The chief trade of Scalloway now is salting and curing fish, which brings a good many boats into its fair waters that would otherwise find no business there.

As we left Scalloway the view from the hill was most beautiful. We were climbing quite a precipitous valley, which the Shetland pony took bravely. Behind and below us lay the village, a picture of quiet, sleepy contentment. The coast stretched far out, opening up more and more as we ascended. The gulls gave us a parting clang, as they flew over the water in wild confusion. But a turn in the road soon shut out the view and much of the brightness from the remainder of the drive.

On our return home, we were met at the door by "peerie Johnnie," as he was called: peerie in Shetland signifying little. Johnnie's father lived next door, and was a fisherman with a large family and three wives: two of whom, it must be added for the sake of the man's reputation, had long slept with their mothers. Peerie Johnnie was the most sturdy young imp of three years old that ever was seen: so sound and solid, broad and solemn, that he was surnamed the Dutchman. His fat little legs passed their days in flying through mud and puddles indiscriminately, and showing a clean pair of heels at the approach of danger.

Johnnie had a brother Charlie who had become very much of a nuisance, and, with the familiarity children often acquire, made his appearance at all times and seasons in our sanctum, with the most unblushing effrontery. So G. one day, with a happy thought, took up his gun and threatened to shoot him. Henceforth no earthly

power would induce Charlie to enter our gates. Johnnie in his turn became somewhat encroaching, but the gun trick applied to Johnnie had no terrors. Upon this, G. one day took out his knife, opened the large blade, sharpened it affectionately, and declared he would cut off Johnnie's head. This was an awful threat to Johnnie, who evidently thought decapitation a much more serious affair than shooting. He showed a rapidly dissolving pair of heels, and henceforth, like Charlie, kept at a respectful distance.

Johnnie was not only Dutchlike in appearance, he was solid in appetite. G. one day treated him to a little of everything upon the dinner table, including a small draught of ale which he thought splendid, and a dose of cough mixture from a bottle on the sideboard, which he thought best of all. He was also Dutchlike in his pugnacious qualities, and when any wish or desire of his mother's happened to thwart his more matured judgment, he would immediately set to and with arms and legs administer a correction with an earnestness worthy of a better cause. Of his father, Johnnie stood in wholesome awe; and of one of his sisters, who at bedtime would come behind him quietly and swoop down upon him like an eagle upon a lamb: only that no lamb ever struggled and kicked and howled in an eagle's claws, as did unhappy Johnnie in the clutches of his sister.

But Johnnie's delight and ambition was to catch sight of one of us going out, and with his fat little legs, and fat husky round voice, beg a penny to buy "gundy"—a compound of treacle and sugar and other ingredients attractive to the youthful mind as the needle to the pole. Gundy was Johnnie's weakness, and any trouble and almost the terrors of the knife would be braved with the chance of a penny at the end. Many a yard he would run behind us, and in plaintive tones appeal for gundy; an appeal not to be resisted. A halfpenny or penny safe in his clutches, arms and legs would go off like the sails of a windmill, and he would literally fly to the gundy shop. In less time than was credible he would reappear upon the scene, no traces left of money or sweetmeat, but a face all smeared with treacle, and eyes with a sheepish look in them that distinctly asked for more. Johnnie, like the horse-leech, was never satisfied.

Poor Johnnie! He was a fine little fellow: our small leaven of humorous humanity amidst a good deal that was sufficiently prosy. No sketch of Lerwick would be complete without him.

"Eh, sirs!" how comes it that I have left the rocks and the seas and the boating to the last? I know not indeed, unless it be that my heart is in it most: for there lies the great attraction of Shetland: there Shetland reigns supreme. In a concluding paper, I must endeavour, in however faint a degree, to do justice to all this wealth of beauty and grandeur: the waters and the rocky coast of this northenmost archipelago.

THE STORY OF RENÉE OF ANGERS.

THOUGH it occurred so long ago as the time of Henry IV. of France, the story we are about to relate formed one of the most remarkable causes célèbres before the Parliament of Paris, when Renée Corbeau, a young demoiselle of Angers, in Normandy, by her eloquence in a court of justice, and by her singular self-sacrifice, saved the life of a false and dastardly lover, to whom she was devotedly attached.

In the year 1594, when Henry IV., justly surnamed the Great (though his passions betrayed him into errors and involved him in difficulties), was on the throne of France, a young man named M. Pousset, a native of Tées, an old episcopal city of Normandy, was studying the Civil and Canon law at the university of Angers, in those days a famous seat of learning. While thus engaged, M. Pousset was introduced to Mademoiselle Renée Corbeau, the daughter of a citizen. She is described as having been a girl of great beauty of person and with great modesty of manner, though witty and lively in spirit, fatalié et caressante, and full of nameless graces. Everyone loved and admired Renée, and when but a youth Pousset sighed for her. He soon learned to love her passionately, and we are told "that he no longer lived but to see and converse with her."

She in turn became deeply attached to Pousset, who proposed marriage, and gave her, in writing, a document to that effect, though her parents were in circumstances so limited that he dared not consult his own (who were people of wealth, rank, and ambition) on this important subject. So the lovers dreamed on, and on the faith of the written promise, Renée, it would appear, yielded too far, and fell, as her mother Eve fell before her; and then repentance came when too late.

The unfortunate Renée had, in time, to make a confidante of her mother, who in her grief and anger revealed all to M. Corbeau. He heaped the most bitter reproaches on their daughter, but agreed that some plan should be adopted to bring Pousset, who was now studiously absenting himself, to reason and a sense of justice. It was arranged that he and Madame Corbeau should feign a journey to a little country mansion they possessed not far from Angers, and that Renée should press Pousset to visit her, when they should take advantage of the occasion to surprise him; a project which was executed with complete success.

Thrown completely off his guard by this unexpected strategem, the lover said with much apparent candour:

"Monsieur Corbeau, be not alarmed for the error which our love for each other has led us into; but pardon us, I beseech you. My

intentions are still most honourable, and I shall but be too happy to espouse your daughter."

The incensed Corbeau was somewhat comforted by this prompt promise of reparation, and sent immediately for a notary, his friend, who lived close by. The latter drew up a formal contract of marriage in legal form, and to this, with Renée, M. Pousset appended his signature and seal, after which he took a tender farewell of the weeping girl, and retired with the view of, reluctantly, breaking the matter to his family; but so true is it that "affection is the root of love in woman, and passion is the root of love in man," that from the hour in which he signed the—to him—fatal contract all his regard for Renée evaporated.

Her beauty and her sorrow alike failed to impress him now, and the faithless Pousset repented him so bitterly of what he angrily deemed a legal entanglement that he hastened to Tées and unfolded the whole of the affair to his father in a story artfully coloured and fashioned to suit himself.

M. Pousset the senior, who possessed a magnificent estate, never doubted but that his amiable and facile son had been entrapped by an artful girl and her parents, and sternly told him that he could never approve of his marriage with one whose portion was so small, and desired him to commit her, the contract, and the whole affair to oblivion. While the document, signed and sealed, existed, this, however, proved impossible; so young Pousset, either by his father's advice or his own inclination, took refuge in the bosom of the Church, and was somewhat too speedily ordained sub-deacon, and then deacon, thinking thereby to vitiate the power of the contract, and to create for life an invincible barrier between himself and Renée.

With all the grief and horror a tender and affectionate heart uld feel when love is so repaid by black perfidy, she heard these tidings, and her soul seemed to die within her; but her old father, who was filled with just indignation, and whose sword the ordination of Pousset kept in its scabbard, raised a civil action against him before the principal court at Angers for having deluded and then declined to marry his daughter in the face of the notary's contract.

The recreant was compelled to appear; but he appealed against the order, and denied the jurisdiction of the court; hence the cause was brought before the Parliament of Paris. Before this tribunal, then, were brought the wrongs of Renée Corbeau, and the whole affair seemed so cruel and odious to the judges—especially the fact of Pousset having taken holy orders (and thereby degraded them) to evade the contract of marriage—that they condemned him to espouse Renée or *lose his head* by the sword of the executioner.

He urged that the sanctity of holy orders utterly precluded the former reparation. On this the court unanimously declared that he must undergo the latter. He was accordingly replaced in the Bastile; the priest who was to attend in his last moments came to prepare

him for death, and as all sentences were summarily executed in those days, already the headsman awaited him.

The heart of the poor girl, who loved him still, was now wrung with new anguish and pity, and she accused herself of being the cause of his approaching doom. Crushed by that dreadful conviction, in her anxiety to save him, or at least have his sentence mitigated in some manner, she conceived the idea of taking all the guilt of his position upon *herself.*

Hastening to the old Palais de Justice, she entered the great hall, the centre of which was then occupied by the famous marble table which Victor Hugo describes as being of a single piece, so long, and so broad and thick, that it was doubtful if in the world there was such another block of marble. Imploring the astonished judges to hear her, she knelt before them, and while scarcely daring to raise her eyes from the floor, she told them in trembling accents that in condemning her lover-husband, for such she deemed him, they had forgotten that she too was culpable; that by his death she would be sunk into sorrow and covered with ignominy; and that while seeking to avenge her, or repair her honour, they would bring upon her the opprobrium of all France!

The judges listened in bewildered silence, while in a low and still more tremulous voice, Renée continued thus:

"Messieurs—I will no longer conceal my crime. Remorse of conscience now forces me to declare that, thinking you might compel M. Pousset to marry me, I concealed the fact that I snared him into loving me—that I loved him first, and was thus the source of all my own sorrow! You deem it a crime that he took refuge in holy orders to avoid the fulfilment of his contract; yet, messieurs, that was not *his* doing, but resulted from the will of a proud and avaricious father, who is, in that matter, the real criminal. Spare him then, I implore you—spare him to the world, if not to me! He has declared that his orders preclude his marrying me; and for that declaration you ordain that he must die. Oh, what matters his asserting that he would formally espouse me if he could; and because he cannot, you condemn him to die, after giving him *a choice.* Who here can doubt that he would marry me in spite of his deacon's orders? Though I am but a weak and foolish girl, I know that we may yet be wedded, could we but obtain the dispensation of his Holiness Clement VIII. Daily we expect in Paris his Legate, who possesses sovereign powers. At his feet I will solicit that dispensation; and oh, be assured, messieurs, that my love and my prayers will obtain it. Suspend your terrible sentence, then, till he arrives."

After a pause, during which she was overcome with agitation, she spoke again:

"Think of all he has endured since his sentence has been delivered, and of all that I am enduring now! Should I have among you but a few voices for me, ought these not to win me some

favour of humanity over the rest, though they be more in number; but alas! should all be inflexible, permit me, in mercy at least, to die with him I love, and by the same weapon."

It is recorded that the unhappy Renée's prayer met with a very favourable reception, and that the remarkable tone of her self-accusation, of having "ensnared" M. Pousset, gave a new colour to his alleged crime. "The judges," we are told, "lost not a word of her oration, which was pronounced with a clear sweet voice, and her words found a ready echo in their hearts, while the wonderful charms of her person, her tears and her eloquence, were too powerful not to melt, if they failed to persuade, men of humanity."

She was requested to withdraw while they consulted, and the First President, M. Villeroy, after collecting their votes, found himself enabled to grant a *respite* for six months, that a dispensation might be obtained if possible; and on this being announced, the plaudits of assembled thousands made the roof of the Palais de Justice ring in honour of Pousset's best advocate, Renée Corbeau.

Ere long the Roman Legate (Cardinal de Pelleué) came to Paris; but, on hearing the ugly story of Pousset, he conceived such indignation against him, for the whole tenor of his conduct, that he constantly turned a deaf ear to every application in his favour. Soon the last month of the respite drew to a close, and the fatal day drew near when Pousset must be brought forth to die!

The unexpected hostility of the Legate cast Renée once more into despair, an emotion all the more terrible that the announcement of M. Villeroy had given her brilliant, perhaps happy, hopes. These, however, did not die. She obtained an audience of Henry IV. soon after he had stormed the town of Dreux and made his public entry into Paris, and, as he was cognisant of her miserable story, on her knees at his feet she once more sought an intercession for her doomed lover, if he could be termed so still.

Henry had too often felt the passion of love not to be moved by the singular beauty of the suppliant, by her sorrow, and the eloquence with which affection endowed her. He raised her from the floor and besought her to take courage, as he would now be her friend and advocate.

The Cardinal de Pelleué could not decline the prayer of such an intercessor as Henry the Great, and, as the luckless Pousset had not received the higher orders of the priesthood, his Eminence granted a dispensation in the name of Clement VIII. The marriage ceremony was duly performed, in fulfilment of the contract signed at Angers, and Renée Corbeau and the lover she had rescued "lived ever after in the most perfect union; the husband ever regarding his wife as his guardian angel, who had saved his life and honour."

James Grant.

EDNA'S TROUBLES.

IT was a fine old room, and fitted up with all the luxury that wealth could command. Its two occupants, a lovely girl, and an elderly man, noble in form, but dark and stern in face, stood under the full blaze of the great antique lamp swinging above their heads. They were discussing a long-disputed question. Old Mr. Lydell, flaming with passion at the girl's last words, burst out vehemently:

"You are not my slave, forsooth! Nevertheless, my haughty young lady, you are under a heavy debt to me. Tell me what you are—who you are? Tell me that, if you can."

The girl did not answer. She put her hand up to her brow as if a pain were there. He resumed:

"You are called Edna Ivesly Hay; but what do you know of yourself beyond that? Answer me. Have not I been the making of you? Did not I take you from—from—yes, almost from the gutters, and transform you into what you are? You are accomplished. Whose money rendered you so? Whose but mine, ungrateful girl! You are graceful as a fairy. Whose money paid the master that drilled you? Mine again! You are beautiful in your silks, jewels, and dainty laces. Whose money purchases for you those desirable things? Mine, and mine only! And wherefore have I done all this? Did I not take you as my own child, hoping and expecting you would repay me with affection and gratitude? What sort of a recompense is this that you are giving me?"

Edna Hay put up her hands deprecatingly. It was all true. Grateful, deeply grateful to him she was: but she could not repay him in the manner he wished.

"My son," resumed Mr. Lydell, "my only son, whom I idolise, has set his heart upon your baby loveliness, and crowned you with the honour of choosing you for his wife. Think you, then, that I can allow you to bring misery upon this house from your childish whims? If so, think it no longer. If you have not already learned what the sin of ingratitude is, learn it now. My son's will is my law—the love I bear him my only religion! Do you understand? Do you understand that I mean you shall become his wife ——"

"I do not like him," she gaspingly interposed.

"With or without your consent, you shall become his wife, simply because it is his will. Theodore loves you—therefore, Theodore's you shall be! To-morrow he comes home. Be wise, and receive him as your future husband!"

There was a dark threat in the old man's eyes, as he concluded, that sent an involuntary shiver through the girl's slender frame.

But a determination equal to his own marked both words and tone as she answered respectfully :

"It is true that I am indebted to you for all that I possess of worldly good, and I am, Heaven knows, truly and deeply grateful. You bade me look upon you as a father, and I have striven, as in Heaven's sight, to give you all a daughter's duty. But, as I said before, I am not your slave. Theodore Lydell I will not, I cannot, marry. Oh, don't you see that he is not a good man ?—handsome, gifted though he is, I could not love him."

"Do you wish to be cast out ?"

"Cast me out," she answered in agitation. "I would rather die than link my fate with his ! Let me go out into the world and battle against the poverty from which you rescued me ——"

"Enough !" thundered the old man. "I will listen to no more folly. My son shall have the bride of his choice ! And there shall be no delay. Next week—next week, hark you—you shall be his wife. Your wedding-dress is already ordered. Now go."

Striding to the door he flung it wide, adding in deep tones, as Edna passed, shivering, into the hall : "Go ! and remember that for the insubordinate there are means to compel submission."

A swift change passed over the girl's face as the door closed behind her, and it was with fleet foot and panting breath that she sped up the stairs and to her chamber.

"What can he mean ? What will he do ?" she gasped shudderingly, as she dropped into a chair before the blazing fire. "Will they force me to marry him ? He is so wilful, so powerful ; and Theodore is deep, and unscrupulous as sin. Heaven help me !"

It was a trying position. The girl, left an orphan when little more than an infant, had been taken to by this very distant and rich relative, John Lydell, and brought up as a daughter of his own. Of course she owed him all gratitude for it ; she wished to be humble and obedient, and to repay him if she could by loving care : but she *could not* marry his son. She had always disliked the selfish, overbearing Theodore, who was ten years her senior ; and she had heard the whispers of the servants about his evil ways. She had said to his father that Theodore was not a good man : she might have gone further into truth and said he was an essentially bad one. No ; never, never could she marry *him.*

And there was Malcolm Payne in the way besides—and Edna's blushes came fast as she thought of him. Mr. Lydell was in the habit of calling him that "beggarly secretary," and would not encourage him at his house. Poor he might be, as compared to the riches of the old man ; but Edna felt sure he loved her : and only a few days ago, when they had met at a dance, he whispered to her, when holding her to him in the whirling waltz, that his salary was already quite enough for comfort, if she could only think it so, and that it would rise higher year by year. She did not know very much

about this Mr. Payne; and they had not met many times—but it does not take many meetings for love to grow.

Mr. Lydell's threat had terrified her. If he did indeed mean to force her into a marriage with his son, how could she contend against him? Sitting by the fire in her terrible trouble and perplexity, her hands pressed upon her aching brow, the thought came into her mind that there was only one way of saving herself—flight. Edna was young and inexperienced, possessing an inordinate idea of Mr. Lydell's power and of her own unprotected weakness: and it did in truth seem to the girl that she could be saved by flight alone. More than ever did she regret that the home had no mistress to whom she could appeal: Mrs. Lydell had been for some years dead.

"I will do it," she whispered at last to herself in her bitter desperation. "I will run away—and this very night. To-morrow Theodore comes, and it might be too late."

In a commotion of heart that few people have experienced, Edna made her few preparations, hoping to escape when the household should be asleep. It was an early household generally: Mr. Lydell was old enough to feel the need of rest. At ten o'clock Edna heard him come upstairs; and by the very tread of his foot, and the bang he gave his door, she knew how angry he still was with her.

Every night at one o'clock a stage coach, as she knew, passed a distant place called Hart's Corner, on its way to catch the mail train at Braemont. If she could join that coach it would take her to the train, and she might escape all over the world then.

Waiting and trembling, sick and irresolute, for this running away seemed to be a most formidable expedition in Edna's eyes, little short of wicked, it seemed that the minutes never would pass. The more she watched the little clock on the mantelpiece, the slower the hands appeared to move. Should she stay and sacrifice herself?—or should she venture on this daring move? It was perhaps the thought of Malcolm Payne that nerved her to attempt it.

When the clock struck twelve, she put out the lamp; and, taking the small paper parcel in her hand, opened the chamber door softly. Listening, as well as she could for the beating of her heart, she made her way softly across the carpeted landing, down the stairs, and finally out through the glass doors of the breakfast-room.

So far, so good. Walking quickly through the garden, she stood within the outer gate, trembling, under the friendly shadow of the great trees, through which the sharp December wind was sweeping its weird song. For a minute, eye and ear were keenly vigilant: there was no movement, no match struck to warn her that aught had been heard within doors. With renewed hope she passed out to the high road.

It was a very lonely neighbourhood; and Edna trembled as much from that as from other fears as she went rapidly along in the dark night. The moon ought to have been out, but it was not.

The way was longer than she had thought for—or seemed so. Hart's Corner was gained at last, and none too soon. She had barely reached it when the stage turned the curve of the hill before her. The coachman drew up. Two male passengers were inside, apparently asleep. Edna shrank into a corner, and was soon forgotten. A long hour of feverish desire to push forward more rapidly at last ended: she took her ticket for a distant place, haphazard, and was soon whirling rapidly along.

Amidst the rush and thunder of a swifter flight she matured her still somewhat indefinite plans. As a first step towards the accomplishment of these plans she left the train earlier than she had intended; getting out at an insignificant station. It might be safer, she thought, than going on to any large town.

All that day Edna walked; not knowing where to go, what to do. Conscience makes cowards of us, and she feared to be seen. It is, however, needless to follow her through the tortuous journey by which she designed to baffle pursuit. The sun had gone down, indeed, night long set in, when, heart-sick and weary, a gleaming light from a handsome villa tempted her to seek shelter there. In truth, she was physically incapable of proceeding farther. Entering the gate, she crossed the lawn to the house.

But the exhaustive effects of unusual fatigue and excitement told severely upon a somewhat fragile nervous system, and it was with unsteady hand and beating heart that she drew the bell. At its first vibration a deep-mouthed hound came leaping around the wall and barked at her—but did not bite. Nevertheless, Edna was thoroughly frightened; and when the door opened, revealing a tall, raw-boned female of severe aspect, her modicum of strength gave out, and instead of the effective little speech so carefully prepared, she gasped some unintelligible words, and fell fainting into the arms involuntarily extended to receive her.

The arms were muscular ones, and she was hastily borne into a charming little room, in which sat the mistress of the house.

"What is it, Burns?" she asked, without looking from the glancing knitting-needles in her hand.

"I dinna ken, Miss Ruth, unless it be a woman frae the skies that dropped in my arms. It's weil they are stout, for she's heavy-like, though an ilka thing," Burns coolly added, depositing her burden suspiciously on the sofa.

The astonished Miss Ruth sprang to her feet with an alacrity that sent her ball of yarn to the opposite side of the room, and left her work pendant on the corner of the work-table beside her.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" she sighed, leaning over Edna's inanimate form, her helpful fingers actively busy. "Chafe her hands, Burns, while I loosen her cloak. What a beautiful girl she is! Quite a lady, I am sure."

Burns set to work, her tongue keeping time to the operation.

"Now, Miss Ruth, I'm the oldest servitor of this old house of the Neals, and you must list to me. Dinna be running daft. You ken naught o' this face, though it be sweet, and I pray you to be careful. What good did you ever know o' these night trampers? Leddies don't go abroad in this fashion—coming down on decent folk in the dark without word or warning. Dinna forget the puir weak auld woman who sped awa' on a mon's legs wi' a dozen o' the auld Neal spoons i' her gown pocket."

Miss Neal, actively engaged in efforts to restore Edna to consciousness, suffered Burns to run on to this point, which was, in truth, a very sore one.

"Hush!" she at last interposed, "cannot you see that the poor little thing is a lady? I'm ashamed of you, Mary Burns! There's some mystery of course; but I daresay she will explain it."

But Edna, though unable to give sign, had *heard.* Opening her eyes on the tall figure, with its stiff angularities, erect as an old grenadier on duty, behind plump little Miss Ruth Neal, she intuitively comprehended that she was an object of suspicion. The serene kindly face of Miss Ruth was, however, a gift for which she was thankful, and with a few faltering words she attempted to rise.

"Thank you, I am quite well again."

"Not quite," returned Miss Ruth, a low, pleasant laugh rippling over her lips at the ineffectual effort. "Lie still, my dear young lady. Burns shall get you a cup of tea."

"How good you are!" impulsively cried Edna, as the door closed on Burns.

And she caught the slender hand that was bending over her, and drew it to her lips. Miss Ruth's heart had pulsated through fifty odd years; but it was still a very soft one, and Edna slipped at once into its softest niche. It was utterly impossible to look at that taking face, and not believe in it.

The keen-witted Burns, on returning with the tray, quickly perceived the impression made on her mistress: and as promptly commented upon it when again out of hearing.

"The Neals war a' alike," she grumbled in her broadest Scotch—as was generally the case if put out. "Shake them a' thegither i' a bag, an' you'd ne'er ken ane frae anither, unless Miss Ruth might fa' out the simplest o' a'!"

But Miss Ruth, unconscious of Burns's depreciative opinion, answered Edna's regrets, and apologetic remark that her journey would be resumed early the next morning, with a cordiality which would have doubly exasperated the waiting-woman. It must, however, be admitted that Edna—after mentioning as her name the abbreviated one of Miss Ivesly, which being merely a baptismal name nobody had ever heard of—fell into anxious thought. She felt that she was expected to explain whence she came, and a few more personal items—and she could not.

"She is so young," thought Miss Neal. "I fear I ought to press her confidence for her own sake."

It was yet early in the evening when Miss Neal conducted her guest upstairs.

"I hope, my dear," she said, as they exchanged good-nights, "that your rest will not be disturbed. I am in hourly expectation of the arrival of my nephew, who has promised me a visit—and it is somewhat rare I get one from him—so if you hear a stir you will know what it is. And in the morning you will tell us your story: we will advise you for the best."

But this was just what Edna was afraid to do. Faint, despairing, she began to lay plans for quitting this house, as she had quitted her own. Mentally and physically exhausted, Edna lay down on the bed, only taking off her shoes and dress, in the midst of which she heard the arrival below, and presently Miss Neal came upstairs, followed by a manly step.

"I am sorry you think I have done wrong, dear," she was saying. "But, indeed, Burns ought not to call her a 'night tramp.' You are tired, so I'll say no more: but in the morning we will insist upon the young person explaining herself. Good night, my lad; you'll sleep well."

With trembling anxiety Edna waited for an hour or more, and then rose. The words had scared her. Miss Neal seemed to be a very *proper* kind of person, and no doubt she and this stern nephew of hers would deem it right to send her back to Mr. Lydell. At any risk she must escape *that*. Lighted by the decaying fire and a brilliant moon, she made a hasty toilet, and was soon standing without her room, prepared for another flight.

Oppressed by a nervous dread of she hardly knew what, detection being uppermost, Edna paused a moment to listen. But profound silence reigned over the cottage; her boots were in her hand, and she gave no sound as she cautiously groped her way downstairs. Whether she should get away she knew not. That there was a back door to the house she had heard through some colloquy between Burns and her mistress, and she endeavoured to find it. The open door of the kitchen gave forth a glimmering light from the decaying fire, and Edna gained the door and peered closely at it to see its fastenings. Only one heavy bolt.

Her trembling hand was about to push back this bolt when a footfall in the kitchen warned her of danger. There was no time to lose; and in a moment she had slipped into a closet just beside her under the stairs, the door of which her anxious eyes, now grown accustomed to the semi-darkness, discovered ajar.

She had barely entered when the footstep came forth; its owner pushed the kitchen door to and made for the stairs. All might have gone well, but for an awkward movement of Edna's. She came in contact with what seemed to be a basket of clothes-pegs, and they came down with a tremendous clatter.

"Them rats again!" ejaculated Burns, irascibly—for she was the night-walker. Back she came to the closet door.

"The door open!" cried she in surprise. "The uncanny things can run in and out. I'll fetch a candle and the poker."

Turning the key in the lock, away went Burns for the poker. Would there be murder committed?

With heart beating to suffocation, Edna prepared for the encounter by drawing the hood of her waterproof more closely about her face. She felt like one in despair.

Very soon Burns returned, bent on the slaughter of the rats. Her hand softly touched the key. It turned; the lock snapped; but ere the door could be moved by the cautious Burns, Edna, hooded and veiled, threw herself against it with all her might, at the same time uttering a low guttural sound in her own great terror, which was followed by her onset. And it all proved too much for Burns. Instantly she lay a discomfited heap upon the floor, candle and bravery alike extinguished.

With swift fingers Edna unfastened the back door and darted out, intensity of dread winging her feet as she fled from the place. As the door swung behind her she paused a moment to put on her boots, and then continued her wild flight with redoubled speed. She was not, however, to escape unobserved.

Miss Neal's nephew, who was no other than Malcolm Payne, aroused from his dreams by the commotion below, sprung from his bed, donned a few articles of clothing, flew downstairs, saw the back door open, and went out in pursuit, leaping over Burns to do it.

Meantime, Burns remained quiescent, a prey to a thousand conflicting emotions. She was not quite sure what the robber had done to her, or whether she was killed or not.

Miss Neal, hovering at the top of the stairs, called down softly and cautiously, "Burns! Burns!"

"Oh, Miss Ruth, run down!" came the appealing answer.

"Where are you? What is the matter?" Miss Neal anxiously inquired.

"The matter! I'm dead, Miss Ruth."

"Dead!"

"Right down dead," groaned Burns. "Here, down in the ha'."

Timorously enough Miss Neal came down. The poker lay along the floor-cloth, the extinguished candle was right under Burns's chin. Miss Neal, suppressing a smile, did what she could to get Burns upright, and inquired particulars.

"My tooth began to ache again, and I came down to get some hot stuff for 't," began Burns, excitedly, "an' was gangin' to bed again, when there came a noise frae the closet there. I said it was the rats; so I locked the door till I could get a candle and the poker. I unlocked the door careful like, when it flew open wi' an awfu' sound, an' struck my poor old head a blow that sent me down there.

Then two robbers tumbled over my feet; two, ma'am : one a minute after the tother; and out o' the house they went, wi' nobody to stop 'em."

Burns's second "robber" was of course Malcolm Payne. In leaping over the threshold he saw something white lying at his feet. Picking it up he found it was a lady's cambric handkerchief.

A peculiar, delicate perfume, of which Edna was especially fond, thrilled through him, and caused him, hurried though he was, to turn to the corners and look keenly at them in the moonlight.

"Edna!" he read, gazing incredulously at the embroidered characters. "It cannot be *my* Edna! and yet—where is she?"

Thrusting the handkerchief into his pocket, he rushed onwards. Edna, swift-footed as a gazelle by daylight, was not so by moonlight and in these strange grounds. Thinking Burns was following her, she sped onwards, uncertain whither. Frantic with excitement and fear she persevered, converting the anguished "Edna! Edna!" ringing hoarsely on the night air, into so many shouts of triumph. And when at last a light hand fell on her shoulder, and she reeled fainting into the friendly arms behind her, she still believed herself vanquished by a foe.

"Poor darling! poor darling! What does it all mean, I wonder," murmured Malcolm Payne, gazing down at the poor little face in the moonlight. "Why, my dear child, don't you know me? your own Malcolm!"

And with a faint cry of relief she lay upon his arm in peace.

"A dozen more, o' the siller spoons gone, ma'am, for I can't set my eyes on 'em naewhere," Burns was announcing as they got back. "If this does na teach us to beware o' night tramps —— eh, mercy me, Mr. Malcolm! then what is it a'?"

"It means that this young lady, who has so fortunately taken refuge here, is my promised wife, Burns," answered Malcolm, who had heard a word or two of explanation from Edna as they came in.

Little more remains to be told. With her head pillowed on Miss Neal, and her hand a prisoner in Malcolm's, Edna told her story in detail. And Malcolm told his aunt *his* story—to tell which had been the chief purpose of this visit to his aunt—that he intended to make this young lady his own with all speed.

An attack of fever followed on the excitement Edna had undergone, during which she had not a more gentle attendant than Burns —who had found her spoons were safe. The wedding followed. For her lover represented to Edna, with all the eloquence he was master of, that she could not be safe from John Lydell and his son until she should be placed beyond their power as Mrs. Malcolm Payne.

ON A CASE OF TROPICAL BIRDS.

HAS the life fled, and does the gold remain—
The gold and green,
The blue and crimson sheen,
The wondrous light, which goes and comes again,
On burnished breast
And wing, and jewelled crest:
The vivid beauty, where no touch of death
Has left his mark; which seems to ask in scorn,
Can aught be fairer than these tints of dawn
Which glance and glow unwarmed by vital breath?

Yes, surely, it were fairer yet to see
The gay birds free,
In tropic grove,
And full of life and happy energy;
Spreading their painted wings in joyous flight—
Each changing hue more bright
Beneath the burning sky;
To see the gleaming throats
Active with tuneful notes—
Each note a part of some glad song of love.

And now the cheerful hum I seem to hear—
The stir of life,
The sounds of joy and strife—
The voices of my birds I hold so dear;
I see their busy movements, catch the gleam,
Reflected in still stream,
Of emerald pinion or of ruby breast.
I am not in my quiet sitting-room,
In twilight gloom;
But in West Indian woods, where, drowsily,
Deep waters lie,
And the fierce sunshine pierces through the shade
High boughs have made;
Where all is rich luxuriance; and the eye,
Tired with the glare
Of colouring and light so warm and rare,
Closes at last in rest.

The rest is broken. I awake, and see
No longer Tropic sunshine, lake, and tree;
But, through the twilight gloom
Of my quiet sitting-room,
Up to the little table at my side,
In all their regal pride,
My silent, soul-less birds that know no change—
My faithful friends, who still are what they seem,
And ever stay with me,
Without the wish to range.
I smile, and bless their tranquil constancy;
I bless them also for my fairy dream.

EMMA RHODES.

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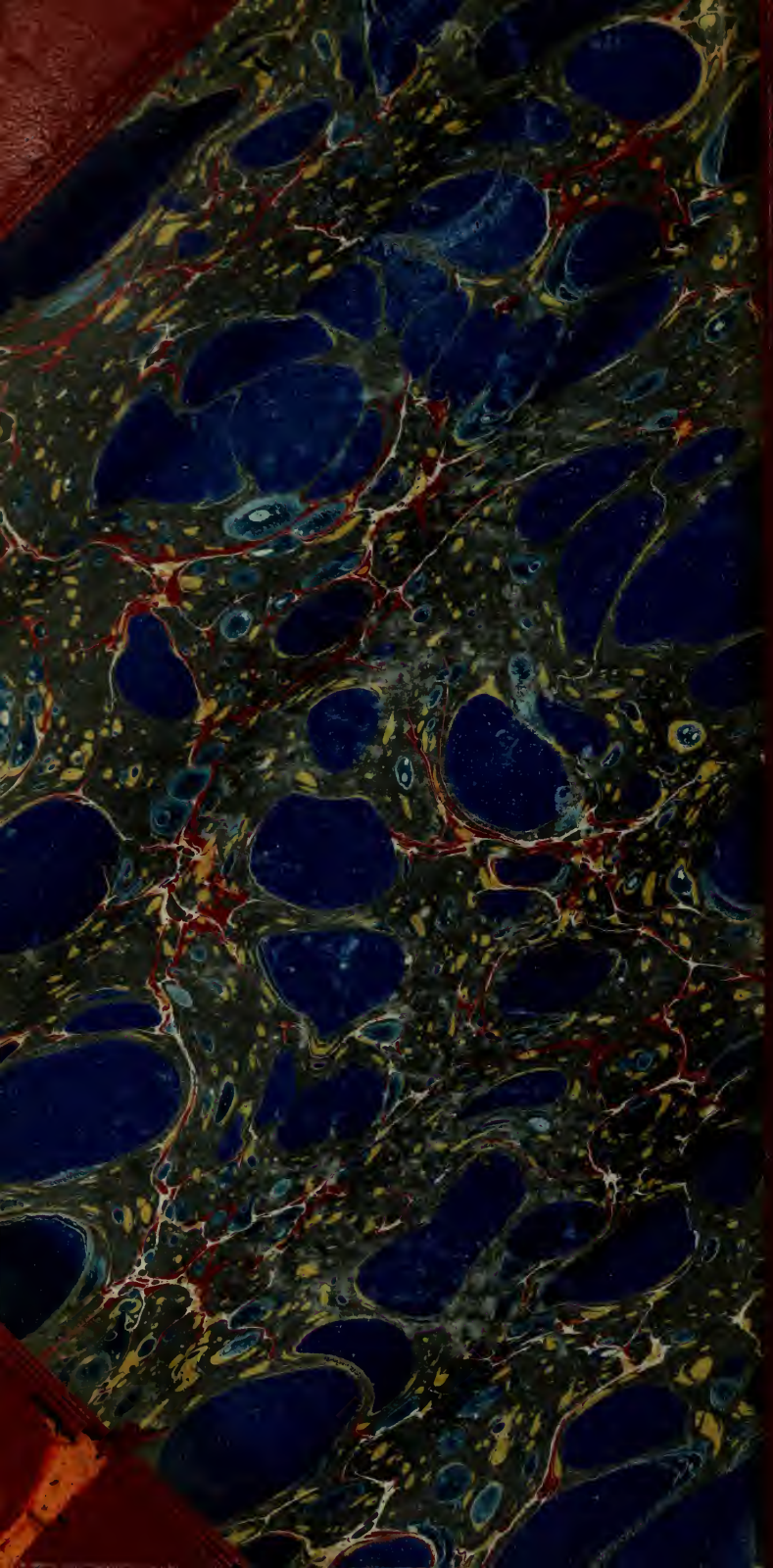
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